

COUNTRY RAMBLES

W PERCIVAL WESTELL

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COUNTRY RAMBLES.



BLACK SWAN ON NEST.

COUNTRY RAMBLES.

BEING A FIELD NATURALIST'S AND COUNTRY LOVER'S
NOTE BOOK FOR A YEAR.

BY
W. PERCIVAL WESTELL,
*Member of the British Ornithologists' Union and the Selborne Society;
Author of "A Year with Nature," etc.*

WITH AN INTRODUCTION
BY
F. G. AFLALO, F.Z.S., F.R.G.S.

Illustrated with Photographs taken direct from Nature

BY
J. T. NEWMAN,
AND FROM DRAWINGS BY ARTHUR MARTIN.

LONDON:
HENRY J. DRANE,
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"Go to Nature in all singleness of heart, and walk with her laboriously and trustingly, having no other thoughts but how best to penetrate her meaning and remember her instruction, rejecting nothing, selecting nothing, and scorning nothing; believing all things to be good and right and rejoicing always in the truth."

John Ruskin.

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THIS VOLUME
IS AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED TO THE MEMORY
OF THE AUTHOR'S GRANDFATHER,
THE LATE
WILLIAM WESTELL,
WHOSE MEMORY THE AUTHOR WILL ALWAYS CHERISH
FOR HIS THOUGHTFULNESS IN INCULCATING
AND FOSTERING WITHIN HIM A
LOVE FOR NATURE AND COUNTRY LIFE.

P R E F A C E.

This volume consists of notes on Natural History written in a plain and unvarnished style, and placed under the dates when they occurred, or general information which came under my notice during the closing year of the Nineteenth Century.

There are some entries which may appear trifling, but a true observer of Nature should not fail to set on record *anything* occurring in the Natural History world, as in the future that apparently unimportant note may be the connecting link which goes to complete a chain of some importance.

There are many entries of Birds, Mammals, Butterflies, Insects, Fishes, Trees, Flowers, etc., which *may* be looked for at certain stated times in *any* year; thus this Diary will also serve as a Natural History Calendar.

For the most part my notes refer to the sights and sounds seen and heard during the year in quiet, homely Hertfordshire, and these together with the other features introduced from time to time, will, it is hoped, be acceptable to those to whom such a volume appeals, and if it imbues any indifferent observers with a love for Natural History, especially that of our own Country, it will not have been written in vain.

I have to acknowledge my indebtedness to Mr. Worsley Benison for his two excellent photographs of the nest and eggs of the Nightjar; to Mr. A. E. Frost for his photos of the Robin's nest in tin can and Blackbird's nest on shed; and also to Mr. Aflalo for his very appreciative Introduction.

W. PERCIVAL WESTELL.

ST. ALBANS, HERTS.,
FEBRUARY, 1903.

INTRODUCTION

BY

F. G. AFLALO, F.Z.S., F.R.G.S.

Mr. Westell has asked me to write a brief introduction to his Diary, and this I have great pleasure in doing, because it seems to me that his book is likely to give enjoyment to a number of readers, as well as to be of some use as a reference work to those who are interested in the monthly comings and goings of Plants and Animals in Hertfordshire, Mr. Westell's County.

Ever since the publication of the famous White-Markwick Diaries, and in all probability before it, there has been a vogue for these regular records of the trivial signs and evidences of the march of Nature's year.

The Naturalist has his season like the Sportsman. He may polish up his binoculars instead of his gun, and the Twelfth of August may not to him be any more important than the Eleventh; yet he, too, has his opening and closing days, not arbitrarily fixed by Law, but more reasonably by the varying conditions of seasonal weather and temperature each year. He has his opening days, when first the Nightingale trills in the hedgerow; when the monotony of the Cuckoo's note is yet pleasing in the little coppice behind his house; when the dashing Swifts and the more gentle Swallows first come beneath the gables; when the Lapwing once more gambols in the lush meadows, and the Wild fowl gather silently in the wintry marshes.

Nor are the Migrants his only care, their journeyings the only landmarks in his journals, for he also watches the changing plumage,

the mating and the birth of resident birds, and, if he be, like Mr. Westell, something of a Botanist into the bargain, he has much to engage his attention even when the birds and the beasts are absent from the field of his observations.

This is not the first time that Mr. Westell comes before the reading public, and my task is lightened in no small degree by the favourable reception accorded to his previous work "A Year with Nature," the plan of which agrees in many particulars with that of the present volume.

His style is throughout discursive. Though he finds something to say for every day in the year, be it only a passing comment on the weather, wind, or temperature, he does not hesitate to digress where digression pleases him. He records the regrettable shooting of a Buzzard in the County, and forthwith, he tracks the bird to the local Taxidermist's, and makes his visit the occasion of a pleasant note on the usual condition of Buzzards shot in this Country.

He takes us on a fishing excursion, but says never a word about the fishing, all his attention being required for the birds of the waterside.

Many of the birds which come under his observation are attracted by a lump of suet hung in his garden, and this, by the way, is a very excellent bait for Titmice or other small birds that one desires to keep under notice.

It may be objected (and I have every expectation that it will) that many of Mr. Westell's entries are of but very trifling importance, yet he was right to print his Diary as it was written. Any attempt at editing might impair the value of the whole, besides which a fact, be it never so slight, may quite conceivably form a valuable link in a chain of evidence, though in itself trite and commonplace. Thus, the author devotes a large proportion of his space, here and there, to the idiosyncracies of the common Sparrow; but it must in fairness be remembered that the neighbourhood of St. Albans does not produce Golden Eagles and Bitterns, and Mr. Westell had perforce to apply his very considerable powers of observation to such species as are to be found in the vicinity of his residence.

That Birds, and Insects, and Flowers monopolise almost the entire book will also perhaps form a subject of complaint with some who looked, from the title, for a broader acquaintance with other classes of animals. Here, too, the author may hold himself reason-

ably excused, for our British Mammals do not, with the exception perhaps of the Hare and Rabbit, lend themselves to close observation; the same may be said of the Reptiles; while, as regards Fishes, Mr. Westell's angling moments belong, as has already been mentioned, to the birds on the bank rather than to the inhabitants of the water that form the ostensible objects of his excursion.

It is above all the writer's enthusiasm that we may envy him, and that reflects itself in his pages to an extent that is contagious. With immense seriousness he records the daily life of a Sparrow; the thrusting above the earth's surface of a blade of Grass; the carolling of a Lark in the heavens overhead.

Wars may rage; Stocks may fall; the National prestige may be threatened on the battlefield or on the yacht course; your devoted Naturalist cares nought for such matters, yet is strangely moved by the apparition of a rare bird in his garden, or by the sound of an unfamiliar note in the thicket.

And for this reason we may turn to this book, with its peaceful text and beautiful illustrations from pen and camera, with a feeling of gratitude that there be still some in our midst who think it worth while to hold aloof from the hurry and worry of an age that is nothing if not sensational, and who ramble with the spirit of Gilbert White—Gilbert White in all his old simplicity and not tricked out in the footnotes and commentaries of five hundred "Editors"—over the fields and through the woods and beside the tumbling streams of a homely Southern County, sharing with their readers the trifling episodes of country life.

F. G. AFLALO.

TEIGNMOUTH, DEVON,
FEBRUARY, 1903.

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JANUARY.



A FIELD NATURALIST ON THE PROWL.

JANUARY.

"Summer, Autumn, Winter, Spring,
Can each its offering bring,
In ceaseless round of harmless pleasure."

1st.—Hard frost during last night. Is not the air biting cold this morning, so cold, that unless the rambler keeps on the move it is positively discomforting? Yet, cold as it is, bird life is very much in evidence. We noted with pleasure half-a-dozen Wild Geese just now taking refuge on a sheet of water at the back of the miller's; we cannot fail to notice also a beautiful Sheldrake on a fast running stream. Goodness knows from whence it came, as no wild fowl are kept hereabouts, yet it seems quite at home and in its element! Walking by the side of the water we disturb a fine male rosy-breasted Bullfinch; how prominent his black head, slaty back and white rump,



COMMON WREN.

and then as he perches and faces us, we get a fine view of his noble breast. There are several Chaffinches "pinking" now and a Robin comes down to the water's edge to quench his thirst. Standing still, and with glasses up, is it not cold? The frost during last night was very severe; probably that accounts for the tameness of the birds this morning. We are now watching a dozen Meadow Pipits flying about, and uttering their shrill alarm notes; whilst a little further on we hear the Hedge Sparrow's somewhat monotonous "cheep, cheep," and

the shrill welcome alarm of the Pied Wagtail. We note the flocks of Starlings to be seen this January morning, fighting, scrambling and shrieking over some precious tit-bit one of their number has just

unearthed, or perchance some hapless Sparrow was the finder, and the Starlings the partakers of the dainty morsel. Is not that a Great Titmouse making a noise in the hedgerow across the road? Looking over the hedge we put up a nice flock of Golden Plovers and a few Lapwings. Are not the former attractive in their delicate silver plumage, as they wheel now to left, now to right, and the light rests now underneath, now above them! Verily, though such a bleak morning, it has interested us not a little to take a note or two of the Avian life astir. I watched a pair of Nuthatches hewing out a hole for nesting purposes. Surely, a very early start, and they were in a great state of commotion when I disturbed them.

A good many well-loaded Holly trees still to be seen, also berries of the Mountain Ash, but these latter are now in a very soddened condition. The network of the trees, as looked at through a field glass, is very wonderful at this season, and now that there is no foliage on the trees it is very interesting to watch the Rooks at their nest trees. First Bulb through in my garden to-day and a few Gnats flying about when the sun was out.

6th.—House Sparrows in the garden as usual after suet and crumbs placed there for them. Three Starlings came, too, and made short work of the suet. They then turned their attention to "grubbing" about, and I watched them through my glasses. How beautiful the speckled plumage! One of them dibbed up a large Worm and eat it. Weather very open; wind springing up, giving place later to rain. I saw a bird last Sunday (December 31st, 1899), and four the day previous, flying over my house at St. Albans, Herts, about size Field-fares, ochre breasts, some white on wings. Made "gurgling noise," well sustained flight. My friend, Dr. Greene, says they might have been American Robins escaped from confinement. I do not think this at all likely. What were they? Robin and Skylark still silent.

8th.—Blue Tit, House Sparrow, and Starling all appeared simultaneously on my Victoria Plum tree and stayed some time in perfect agreement.

14th.—Greenfinch, several Starlings, and Sparrows (House) on refuse heap in front of my house, and several Rooks dibbing about on the ploughed land. Very frosty and cold. Nature still sits tight.

16th.—The Robin re-assumed its song to-day. It is some weeks since I heard it. Frost gone again. Raining. Last night very wide circle round the moon. As one gets about the country, the sights and sounds to be seen and heard are many and various. In an old market

town just recently I was interested in a collection of birds and animals which were being exhibited. They were all in one cage, agreeing with each other quite amicably, and the following constituted this happy family: Two Jackdaws, a Rook, a Kestrel, a Monkey, two or three Guinea Pigs, three Cats, a Dog, two or three Rabbits, a couple of Pigeons, and three black and white Rats. The Monkey appeared to be the chief entertainer and lord of the situation. He caught the Rats and put them on his head, holding all three in one "hand"; he made the Cat and the "little wild Rabbit" jump over a perch, as also a Guinea Pig, the Wombwell Minor, whose "menagerie" it was, telling the sagacious creature not to catch hold of the Guinea Pig's tail! I certainly did not approve of the so-called performances which some of the occupants of the cage were put through, but as an instance of fur and feather enemies living harmoniously together the sight was one of the most striking it has been my lot to witness.

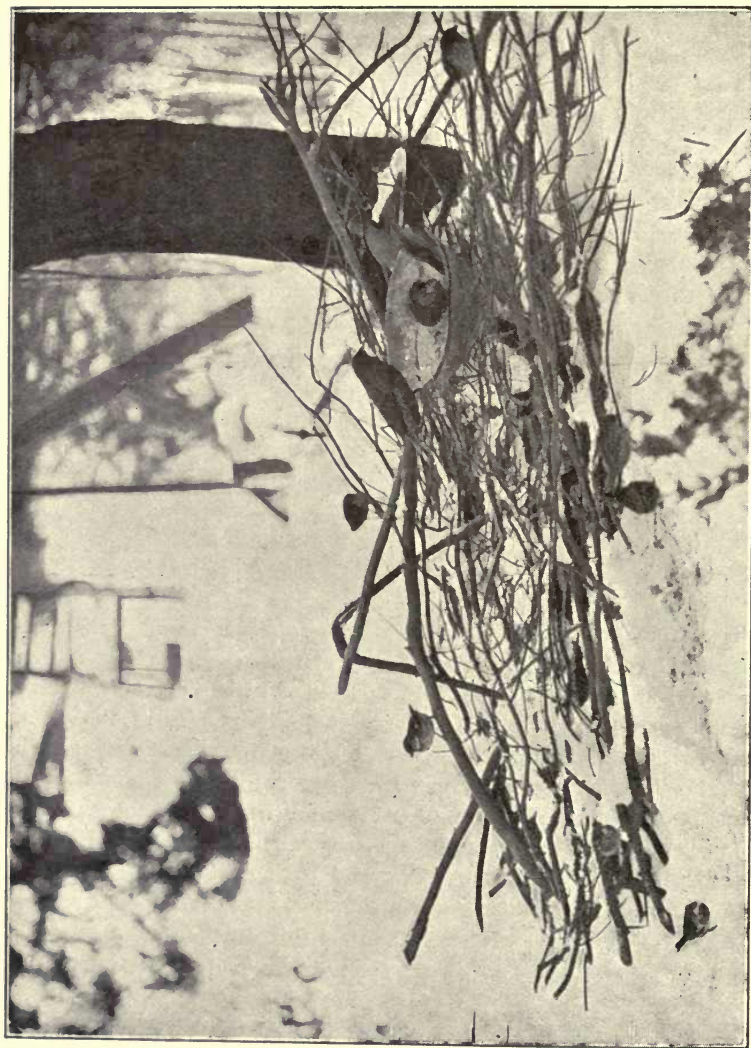
19th.—Heard a Hedge Sparrow warbling to-day for the first time for some weeks. The Bulbs in garden coming forward again apace. My Robin now sings to me daily. Weather very mild, but damp.

21st.—Very hard frost last night. Heavy mist descended early, most miserable day. Went for a not very enjoyable ramble, but depressing surroundings apparently did not affect the Robins; I heard at least half a dozen singing simultaneously. I mistook one particular bird's melodies for those of the Song Thrush; the imitation was perfect.

The Chaffinch was to be heard "pinking" again. Skylarks twittering, but very slightly. Amusing to watch Starlings in my garden tugging away at meat bone. With that bayonet-like bill every vestige of meat was torn off and devoured. The bone was in the path, and a little Blue Tit appeared, but could not summon up enough courage to partake at the same table as he of the green and violet reflections, but a cheeky, impudent House Sparrow had the audacity to try and smuggle the chop bone from the Starling, but he was eventually unsuccessful. Such pluck and daring deserved success. A Song Thrush or two paid me a visit during the day.

The Honeysuckle is making great headway, and in a few weeks from now, with some nice warm sunshine, the leaves will be all unrolled.

The Fieldfares and Redwings have made the stock of Holly and Mountain Ash berries look smaller, but a good supply still remains, enough to last them at all events until they repair to the far away Pine Forests of Norway.



SPARLINGS AND SPARROWS FEEDING IN THE GARDEN.

The Bullfinches have taken all the berries off my Privet hedge; they are very partial to these.

The Rooks pass early morning and just before dusk, from a Rookery about half a mile distant, over my house, always in the same direction and about the same time. There is plenty of suitable dibbing-ground near their homesteads; why do they prefer to roam so far away?

24th.—Miserable Scotch misty morning, but the Skylark singing very deliciously in spite of the unpropitious elements. This is the first time I have heard a Lark singing for some weeks. I saw two or three pairs chasing each other over the fallows; the note uttered as they do this is very musical and clear ringing.

The Starlings have not been chattering lately, but the Hedge Sparrow sings daily, and, of course, the Robin.

The Mistle Thrush is singing; it is one of the earliest birds to resume its song. It does not possess much variation, but it is astonishing how far its notes travel. At this season, too, one notices with pleasure the flocks of Fieldfares and Starlings dibbing about on the grass lands. It always strikes me as curious that these Winter visitors from Norway, the Fieldfares, should be so silent during their sojourn amongst us. How delightful it would be if they treated us to the song they pour out in the Pine Forests of picturesque Norway. Although the frost has been, and is still severe, one has not to search long before unearthing various Slugs and Spiders, only waiting for the breath of Spring before making their appearance well above ground. The Bulbs are pushing through quickly, the Honeysuckle is unrolling very fast, and the new shoots on various plants makes one think of the glorious Springtime! The rich brown earth (that is, where the farmer tills his land properly, and has had it ploughed up in deep furrows) seems to be benefiting greatly from the driving wind, and a noisy Chaffinch or two disporting themselves on the summits of the upturned clods make a picture which no artist could paint with justice. A score of Rooks strut over the brown earth, searching diligently for the obnoxious grubs, which lay harbouring underground, and they also present a pretty study, such as could not be put on canvas realistically.

25th.—It may be interesting to jot down "right now," as the Americans say, some of the trees and shrubs which even at this barren season are delicate in form and colour. Those which occur to me as I write are:—Golden Yews, Hollies, Silver or Paper Birch, Golden or Cardinal Willows, Dogwood, Sweet Briar, Pyracantha, Pernettyas,

Cotoneasters, Japanese Winter Jasmine, Mahonia, various Ivies, Bamboos, Gorse, Broom, Heather, Scotch Fir, the Arbutus, Lea Buckthorn, Osiers, Swamp Cypress, Box, and various Reeds.

26th.—A Spring-like morning, light earlier and dark later.

"Rusticus" in "To-day" writes as follows:—"The only way to outwit the Sparrow is to hang up the food in such a way or in such places that nothing will persuade the Sparrow that a trap is not intended. A swinging board hung close to the window makes an excellent breakfast table for the small birds, and though the Sparrows prefer to sit on "neighbouring" trees and chirp warnings to each other, the more confiding birds, Wrens, Robins, Hedge Sparrows, Chanfinches, Greenfinches, Bullfinches, and all the tribe of Tits, will visit it freely. But, perhaps, the most marked contrast between the



YELLOW BUNTING.

guile of the Sparrow and the confidence of the Tits is brought out if you hang up a lump of suet, fat, or a large meat bone at the end of a string. Nothing will persuade the Sparrows that the string is not part of a trap, and it acts like a scarecrow upon their nerves, insomuch that they will not even sit in the tree to which it is appended."

Whilst giving credit to my friend "Rusticus" for his very excellent and practical sketches—"To-day with

Nature"—my observations are certainly not in keeping with his as to the points raised in the above extract. I have nearly always a lump of suet, meat, or fat hung up in my garden for any of the feathered race, and no matter when I look out of my window at this season of the year there are at least half a dozen House Sparrows tugging away at the fare provided, trap or no trap. And as to their not sitting in the tree to which the fare is appended, it is entirely an error on the part of "Rusticus," for I have counted as many as a score in the self-same tree! The Sparrows, one must assume, in the garden of the writer I have quoted, must be of an entirely different nature to those which spend nearly all their time at this season in and about my own garden.

The Skylark was soaring and singing deliciously this morning, and the Rooks were up quite early.

27th.—I am informed, although I cannot yet confirm it, that the Song Thrush has been singing some little time now.

I was interested this morning watching a Great Tit feeding on a lump of suet, tied by a piece of string to a tree in my garden. How he hangs and clings, and picks and pecks, and then off like a dart at the least interruption; I cannot make out from whence he comes or whither he goes. As soon as the suet or bone is hung up, he is there; when he has had his fill he is off, but so long as the dainty morsel lasts he will still visit me.

28th.—An inch or so of snow fell during last night. The House Sparrows waiting for their meal when I got down this morning. The Tit visited me as usual. The Rooks were clamouring very early this morning, but the Robin and Skylark have been silent all day.

30th.—Very cold cutting wind yesterday and to-day, and birds all silent. Blue Tit with me in the garden as usual. The Starlings have not chattered of late. The Chaffing is "pinking."

31th.—"Chill airs and wintry winds! My ear
Has grown familiar with your song;
I hear it in the opening year —
I listen, and it cheers me long."

LONGFELLOW.

To close my notes for January I may add a few lines as to the cultivation of a hobby. My advice to a young man is to take up some pure and sensible hobby; it is one of the strongest safeguards against all dangers, and cannot be kept too much to the fore.

To all those who wish to indulge in a hobby, to those who are of a morose and uninteresting temperament, I would suggest the study of Natural History. One cannot realize the fascination of such a study until it is practically put to the test, and the more it is pursued the more interesting it becomes, and the more wonderful are the laws of Nature displayed. To gain anything like a clear and useful knowledge of Natural History, the mind must be fostered so soon as it arrives at the understanding stage, and parents should give their growing children every encouragement. I am, however, addressing these lines more particularly to young men, and intend to shew how delightful and fascinating is the pursuit of a sensible

hobby. The first act almost of the youngster is to plunder and pillage a bird's nest, catch a Butterfly or a Moth and stick a pin through it; to pull down the tree branches and the hedgerows, and generally to destroy, rather than to appreciate, and take an interest in, Nature.

Boys will be boys the whole world over, but to British boys I now appeal to throw off the mantle of destruction and put on the cloak of protection; to throw away the pistol, the gun, the sling, and the catapult, and substitute a good field glass, an interesting hobby, and a clear brain.

The pleasures and profits to be derived are inestimable, the information imparted helps one considerably to understand the laws of Nature, and to appreciate the things around us. Our spare time may



BLACKBIRD.

be profitably filled up in field rambles, taking notice of any and every thing which crosses the path, and there are sights and sounds cropping up at every turn. Right throughout the year—from January to December—bird and insect life, trees, wild flowers, fish, and so on are to be seen or heard, and there is never a dull moment to the true Nature lover.

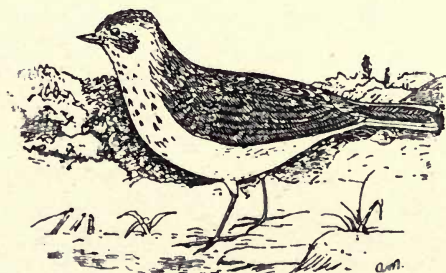
Observe everything carefully and minutely,

find out, if possible, by practical experience anything which puzzles you, read all you can which deals with, or in any way bears upon, your hobby, and learn to cultivate the art of writing for the benefit of others, and for your own satisfaction. Make no observation with regard to any creature, tree, flower, or other component part of Nature which you cannot prove, but do not be beyond asking for information whenever occasion arises. Be consistent and true, painstaking, and lasting. Do not take up the study of Nature—or in fact any study—if you do not intend to stick to it. Do not aspire to climb the ladder of fame all at once; start on the lowest rung, and climb steadily

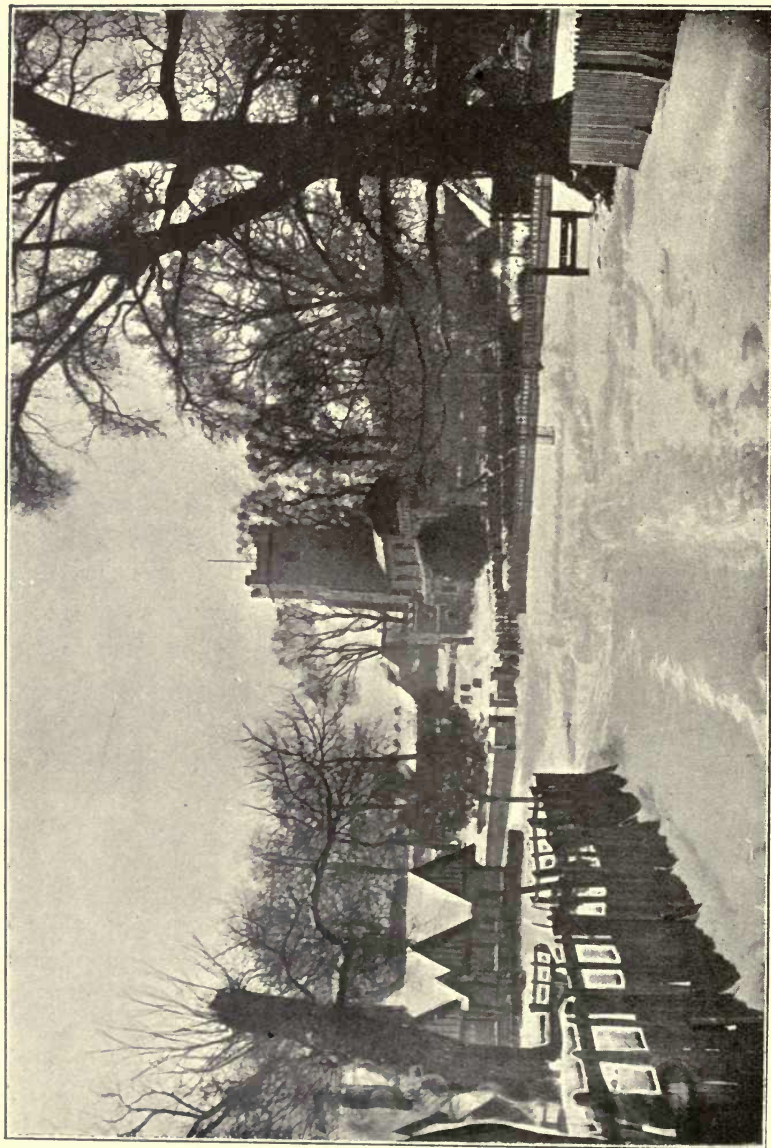
upwards, taking care never to retrogress when once you have started. Endeavour to be of service to others who are engaged in a similar study, impart useful and interesting information to indifferent observers, and cultivate acquaintances which will benefit you. Always protect the creatures you propose making a life-study of; preach and practise humanity.

Make your own collection of interesting objects, but do not become indiscriminate or destructive. Your duty is to play such a part that the balance of Nature is not upset by your hobby or study, but rather that it gains thereby.

A more interesting study than that of Nature is hard to find. Every bird that cleaves the air differs in some way or another; every song that is uttered, every egg that is laid, every nest that is built, every insect and flower—all living things—are varying and interesting withal. Pay attention to common things, study them carefully, and do not pass them by. Do not aspire to collect and study rarities when you as yet know nothing of the commoner forms of life. Pay as much notice to the "common" Sparrow as to the Golden Eagle, to the Celandine as well as the Orchid. Study the House Fly as well as the somewhat rare Hawk Moths, the Earthworm as well as the Adder. Appreciate the solitude of Winter, the fresh green flush of Spring, the beautiful tints of Autumn. The Seasons are ever changing, and with them comes variety. Variety is charming, and there is variety indeed in Nature. Think and reason out your own ideas, then entertain communication with others and write the result of your labours. Above all, be on the side of dumb animals, destroy nothing which is not vermin, show the good birds do and the protection they need, prove how fatal it is to tamper with Nature and upset the balance, and do not, in the words of Cowper, enter on your list of friends, though polished with fine manners and good grace, those who heedlessly set foot upon a Worm.



FEBRUARY.



A VILLAGE UNDER SNOW. NOTICE THE OLD STOCKS TO THE RIGHT.

FEBRUARY.

“Richly embossed in silken grass
The Golden Dandelion shines;
A Sun flower, in the early Spring,
And bright when Summer eve declines.”

1st.—During the last few days of January, and throughout the present month, the following Butterflies may be looked for, especially if the weather is favourable:—Large Garden White or Cabbage Butterfly, Small Garden White, and the Green Veined White. I purposely mention only those which may be seen on the wing, and this I shall do through each succeeding month. At this season Butterfly life is to all appearances dormant, but when warm April is here, and merrie May, the reader will be amazed at the large additions to our list.

A correspondent, writing to me under this date, says: “I have lately been staying in the neighbourhood of Surbiton, and there heard on several days the Robin, the Thrush, and the Blackbird, and on one or two occasions I heard Skylarks. It is a great source of pleasure to have the birds come into one's garden in the way in which you have them come. I heartily wish that more persons would adopt the course which you pursue of endeavouring to attract and protect them, and providing food for them in hard times. The thus ‘looking after’ them has afforded much pleasure from time to time to members of my family, and to myself.”

2nd.—The variability of the English climate is extraordinary. Well might the Americans say we do not have weather, only “samples.” To-day it has been snowing continuously, and, having frozen last night, the ground was soon covered. At nine o'clock to-night it was several inches deep, and in places where it had drifted it was much deeper. This welcome fall should do much good, as several Bulbs were coming along too fast, and other plants, &c., need sheltering from the frost.

Mr. William Hare, of St. Albans, an old and well-read Naturalist, told me to-day that a Common Buzzard was shot in Hertfordshire on Friday last, the 27th January. It had been seen in the neighbourhood for some days. My informer was pledged to secrecy as to where, and by whom, the bird was shot, as it is a penal offence on the estate to shoot or destroy a bird of prey. Mr. Hare kindly told me the Buzzard was in the hands of Mr. Spary, a local Taxidermist, and I have been and seen the bird. It is a very fine specimen, and measures three feet from tip to tip, wing measurement

Mr. Hare tells me that on Saturday last, the 28th January, he saw a pitched battle between two male House Sparrows as to a nesting site! The audacious rascals fought for ten minutes at least. Fancy, nest building in January!

This snow will act as a deterrent on the singing of our feathered musicians, although I have often heard the Robin and Wren singing in the very depth of Winter, evidently cheered by the transient gleam.

3rd.—We woke this morning to find that much more snow had fallen last night. It was very deep in places where it had drifted, but there were at least 10 to 12 inches generally. I cleared a place in my garden to lay the breakfast table for the birds. How hard weather, and the pangs of hunger, affects their tameness! I could stand within a few feet and watch the Great Tit and the Sparrows, the Robin and the Starlings. I put up a Linnet or two on some waste ground this morning. The Larks do not seem to relish this return of Winter, and are quite silent again.

The hedgerows look very pretty, just as if snowballs had been made and stuck on to them; I do not remember seeing this before. As the fall was accompanied by wind many very exposed trees are quite destitute of the pure, crisp substance.

4th.—Thawing very fast, but the air still seems full of snow. Weather mild and clear; some sunshine. A Coal Titmouse was in the garden this morning. The House Sparrows are fighting for partners; I saw three male birds this morning fighting like demons, and hovering Hawk-like in the air. All birds quite silent again.

It may be interesting to those into whose hands this book may fall, to know that there are four species of Water Newts in Britain, and their names are as follows:—1, The Great Water Newt; 2, the Common Smooth Newt; 3, the Straight Lipped Water Newt; 4, the Palmated Smooth Newt.

Leaving the Newts and coming to the Dragon Flies, it is interesting to note that there are no less than 46 species in our Island, and 160 species of Caddis Flies!

6th.—Very frosty, but snow nearly gone. Robin at the meat bone hung up in the garden.

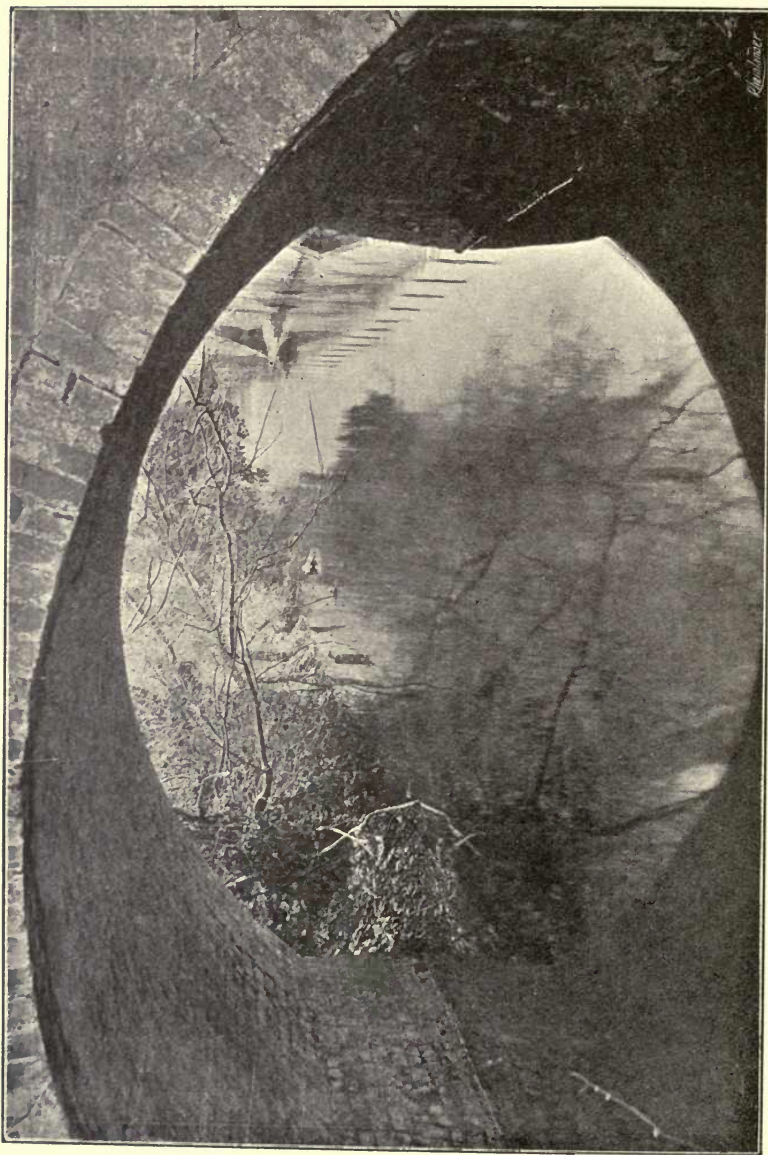
Has the reader ever noticed the predatory character of the Rook? Just recently I observed a couple of these birds watching carefully a crowd of noisy chirruping House Sparrows, who were quarrelling over a crust of bread one of their number had carried from a neighbouring backyard. The two sagacious Rooks for a time hovered Hawk-like in the air, and then settled on a low hedge hard by the smaller birds. Presently one of the Sparrows made off from the rest with the coveted prize, and immediately one of the Rooks pounced down and snatched away the tit-bit, devouring it with evident self-satisfaction.

10th.—Very wintry, and another fall of snow. The papers say it is the deepest fall we have had in the South, since January, 1887. Skating to-day in full swing. This afternoon I amused myself for an hour or more watching the various birds which came and fed on a lump of suet, which had been placed in the fork of my Grand Duke Plum tree. At one time there were six Starlings, fighting and scrambling after the precious morsel, and one rough old gentleman took possession and ate continuously for twenty-five minutes, and even then seemed disposed to keep on. Several Sparrows kept flying on to



STARLING.

the tree, and one or two of the more pugnacious ones got dangerously near the mimic, but a snap from that dagger was quite sufficient for our cheeky and impudent little friend. Presently one or two more Starlings arrived, and there was a regular tussle as to who was to have possession, and in their clumsy flutterings they knocked down the prize to the ground. This frightened them somewhat, they evidently thought it was a trap after all, and that it was judicious to keep a safe distance. But the Sparrows were after it, trap or no trap, and the Starlings, not to be outdone by an insignificant Avian-rat, summed up courage, and made short work of the remains, each making off with a



THE WINTER HAUNT OF THE KINGFISHER.

small piece of the suet, after taking advantage of the scouting Sparrows who signalled that all was well.

The Sparrows are always with me in my little plot, and they seem to resent the interference of their black relations. I say black, but, as looked at through a pair of glasses, how beautiful the brown and green and violet of the plumage. On my other Plum tree, the favourite Victoria variety, there were at one period of the proceedings thirteen Sparrows watching the operations of the larger birds with evident disgust and discomfort. During the afternoon I heard the welcome "pink, pink" of a Chaffinch, watched a Song Thrush hopping down the garden path in quest of food, noted a few Rooks flying home to their roost-trees, and then the snow-flakes began to fall, and all was still; the birds departed, taking up their quarters under the snug shelter of the evergreens, or huddled together in some barn or out-house, where the Bats are clinging to one another in their long Winter sleep.

11th.—It was blowing a gale this morning, and was piercing cold. I broke up a seed cake into small pieces, and placed it within half a dozen yards of my sitting-room window. At one time the following birds were all busy feeding simultaneously: one Robin, three Starlings, two hen Chaffinches, and a score of House Sparrows. I never saw a Robin in finer plumage and he was as plump as a pumpkin. He does not seem to have suffered from the pangs of hunger as yet, but it seems as if we are to have harder weather still. The Starling is a most extraordinary bird; he is nervous, excited, and never seems to be at rest, always on the move, dancing or waddling, flying, fighting, or amusing the listener with its ridiculous "song." But we must not forget his usefulness as a Grub destroyer, and we forgive him for his little idiosyncrasies. The seed cake seemed very much to the liking of all the birds I have named excepting our favourite Redbreast, who, so far as I could see, picked out the bread crumbs. Now and then the dear little fellow hopped on to the water-butt to have a sip of water, but, alas, all is frozen. There is a little icicle hanging on the end of the spout, and he had a tug or two at this. Could he have thought it was *not* frozen?

A Great Titmouse was in the garden this morning, but did not seem disposed to stay with us.

This afternoon for the mid-day meal of pieces of meat, vegetables, and bread, we had in the garden many feathered visitors. At one time I counted not less than 15 Starlings, screeching the most hideous



THE FROZEN BROOK.

noises in their eagerness to get at the spoil. So far as I could see there was only one female bird among the crowd. By the way, a male and female Chaffinch looked in during the afternoon. Could they have been paired, for during the Winter one mostly sees the two sexes of these birds quite apart from one another? We put a whole dishful of pieces out at 1.30, and by 2 o'clock it was all gone. All the small particles that were left a sweet little hen Chaffinch picked up. It was amusing to see a rough old Starling fly into the Plum tree with a piece of bread, whilst two or three Sparrows waited underneath to partake of the fallen crumbs which my lord in his ravenousness allowed to escape his notice. After a good fill the Starlings repaired to a tree down the garden, and there sat sunning themselves, quite indifferent to the cutting wind and driving sleet. But the sight of some half-dozen Sparrows taking possession of the dinner fragments was too strong a temptation; they came back and speedily cleared off the lot. They must now be satisfied until to-morrow's breakfast table is laid. I cannot understand why the Greenfinch does not visit me more frequently. He is a most voracious bird, but extremely nervous, yet what about the Starling? It was some time before even he could sum up courage enough to come, but he is now a regular visitor. A Song Thrush made its appearance this afternoon, but made a short stay, a remark which also applies to a Great Tit. The country around is frostbound, and the birds, I am afraid, are suffering great privations. What pleasure it affords to watch them from the window, and to know that you have been the means of filling many a hungry belly. During the day someone who has nothing better to do has been banging away and taking advantage of the tameness of the feathered tribe at this season. I am feeding the birds for him to shoot perhaps!

A few days ago I saw a Wren flitting across the road in front of me; he disappeared into the hedge. How does such a wee feathered mite stand this hard weather? His diet is of an insectivorous character, but during the Winter I think scraps must be partaken of to a very great extent. Yet, the Wren very rarely comes into my little plot, and when he does he always hops about, along and underneath the fence, and even if there is food put out for him does not deign to touch it. I would so much like to watch this feathered favourite mixing up with the other guests.

12th.—The Ring Dove at this season of the year feeds very largely on the berries of the Ivy. A friend saw one just lately with its crop crammed with these berries. He also tells me he has seen a hat-

ful of young Clover taken out of its crop, and he once found a piece of glass as large as a Walnut inside one. Ring Doves, better known, perhaps, as Wood Pigeons, are most voracious birds. They do a lot of harm to young Turnips, Clover, and Corn, but eat the seeds of many obnoxious weeds, such as Charlock, also Acorns and Beech Mast

All birds still silent. One cannot hear any bird sound now except the occasional "pink, pink" of the Chaffinch. Many birds are pairing.

13th.—Great deal more snow falling to-night; blowing a regular blizzard.

"Announced by all the trumpets of the sky,
Arrives the snow, and driving o'er the fields,
Seems nowhere to alight: the whited air
Hides hills and woods, the river, and the heaven,
And veils the farmhouse at the garden's end."

EMERSON.

We are having a good, old-fashioned Winter, the first time for some years, but as one listens to the moaning of the wind and the beatings against the panes we think of the poor birds. The Starlings were very ravenous at the meat bone to-day in the garden; they almost gorged themselves to death. The Blue Tit appeared, also the Robin and the Sparrows.

14th.—A blizzard raged all through last night, and we woke this morning to find the snow drifted in places to the depth of three and four feet; it is the heaviest fall we have had for some years. The birds were quite tame this morning when I fed them, and so ravenous! It has thawed during the day, but to-night it is freezing hard. The vagaries of our English climate are proverbial.

15th.—Snowing again this morning, giving place to rain, and a very rapid thaw later. The birds may now drink to their heart's content, as there is water everywhere. The streams are swollen, and this volume of water should do much good to the land. The young Lambs are having a very bad time, I am afraid, this rough weather, and farmers are now looking forward to the Springtime. I hear a pair of Ring Doves are building a nest in St. Martin's Churchyard, Thames Street, London; they have built there for the last three years. They are very early and late breeders. When this snow has gone let us hope for some nice bright sunshine, and Nature will then assert herself very quickly.

It is interesting just now to note where our regular Summer Migrants spend the Winter. I think the following list is fairly accurate:

- 1.—Spotted Crake, Africa and India.
- 2.—Ring Ouzel, Northern and Central Africa, and Asia Minor.
- 3.—Wheatear, Western and Northern Africa to Persia and Northern India.
- 4.—Stone Curlew, Temperate Europe, Northern Africa, and South-Western Asia.
- 5.—Chiff Chaff, Shores of the Mediterranean.
- 6.—Yellow Wagtail, Africa.
- 7.—Sand Martin, India and Africa.
- 8.—Swallow, Ethiopia and India.
- 9.—House Martin, South of Abyssinia.
- 10.—Redstart, Northern Africa.
- 11.—Grasshopper Warbler, Northern Africa and Southern Europe.
- 12.—Whinchat, Northern Africa.
- 13.—Blackcap, Northern Africa and Southern Europe.
- 14.—Nightingale, Africa.
- 15.—Hobby Falcon, Africa and India.
- 16.—Wryneck, China and Northern Africa.
- 17.—Cuckoo, Central Africa and Southern India.
- 18.—Tree Pipit, Africa, Persia, and India.
- 19.—Common Sandpiper, Africa.
- 20.—Lesser Whitethroat, Africa generally.
- 21.—Greater Whitethroat, Southern Africa.
- 22.—Willow Warbler, Africa and Persia.
- 23.—Kentish Plover, Africa, India, and Southern China.
- 24.—Corncrake, Algeria, Egypt, Asia Minor, and Palestine.
- 25.—Red Backed Shrike, Africa
- 26.—Sedge Warbler, Northern Africa and Asia Minor.
- 27.—Garden Warbler, Africa.
- 28.—Reed Warbler, Africa.
- 29.—Marsh Warbler, Africa.
- 30.—Wood Warbler, Africa.
- 31.—Quail, Egypt, and Northern Africa.
- 32.—Turtle Dove, Northern Africa, Egypt, and Nubia
- 33.—Swift, Africa.
- 34.—Spotted Flycatcher, Africa.
- 35.—Pied Flycatcher, Africa.
- 36.—Nightjar, India and Africa.

The birds have had much difficulty this last few days in obtaining food, and it is interesting to note that they do not die so much of cold as of hunger. Yet the great tenacity of life some birds possess when deprived of food is marvellous, and the following instances are recorded in the "Ibis":—A Golden Eagle, 21 days; an Eider Duck, 28 days; an Albatross, 35 days; and a Penguin, it is stated, can live two months without food.

16th.—As I looked out of my bedroom window this morning I saw in the distance half-a-dozen Rooks drinking at a pool of thawed snow. It has been a beautiful Spring-like day, and the power of the sun is increasing daily. The Starlings are quite themselves again, and have unshrugged their shoulders; they have been perfectly miserable-looking this last few days. I came across a solitary Gnat in the garden this morning, but a friend tells me a good many have been dancing in the sunshine.

17th.—Snow nearly all gone. It is quite nice to see the green meadows of Old England once more. The floods are out, and the land is being watered in this way by the wonderful hand of Nature. I watched with much pleasure a Skylark soaring this morning, and listened to it pealing out those beautiful bells we all know and love so well. He was soaring in a circular direction, and I verily believe he was endeavouring to attract a female as a partner for the nesting season of 1900. There is to my mind much more in this bird language than we can understand, and the deeper we investigate the more mysterious and wonderful it becomes. With the surroundings so damp and dismal, I could not help admiring this courageous Lark pouring out such delicious bubbling music, and the sight and sound did my heart good and spurred me on for brighter days.

Shortly after this occurrence, coming across some waste land, I marked down a male Reed Bunting. He was a picture with his jet black head and white collar round his throat, and very lively, but his voice was silent. During the Winter most of the Bunting tribe resort to the stackyards and partake of the grain, but I have never seen the Reed Bunting to any extent in such surroundings. He is for the most part a bird of the waterside, yet here he was close to my house, more than two miles from water. He was evidently feeding on the seeds of some obnoxious weeds, such as Thistle, Charlock, &c. This bird, although black-headed, must not be confounded with the true Black-headed Bunting, a rare visitor to this Country. The Starlings are out on the land again "grubbing" and the Sparrows are quite lively, apparently delighted at the disappearance of Winter.

Those of us of the younger generation of Naturalists can have no better treat than to hold converse with a practical Naturalist of the old school. I have had such a treat to-day. I called on Mr. Spary, of St. Albans, the Taxidermist who is setting up the Buzzard mentioned in this diary under date of February 2nd. The bird, on being weighed by Mr. Spary, turned the scale at two ounces short of two pounds, and was as fat as butter. Mr. Spary remarked that the bird had been feasting in some rich Game preserves. It is the first Buzzard he has had through his hands in the flesh. He told me that all the Hawks and Owls he had been brought into contact with were, on dissection, not at all fat, and that the case of the Buzzard under notice was a singular exception.

Chatting with such a delightful man, how the time flies! Of the many birds seen and talked about several are worth recording here. I saw a buff cinnamon Blackbird, shot by Mr. Spary himself, and a similar coloured Hedge Sparrow. Two or three Kingfishers and a Greenfinch freshly killed were on view, as also a black Skylark, with a whitish patch underneath, taken from the nest and reared by hand, now stuffed. Other birds I saw were a Great Spotted Woodpecker, Nuthatch, female Golden Pheasant, Cuckoo, Bullfinch, Goldfinch, Little Owl, two or three Dippers, &c.

Of all his specimens Mr. Spary had something interesting to narrate. He remembers the time when a nest of young Quails were disturbed by the mowers not 500 yards from my house, but alas, civilisation has driven the birds from their haunts, and the particular field where this nest was found is now a sports ground. Yet hereabouts many shrubs are planted, and these afford splendid cover for the smaller birds to nest in.

Mr. Spary described to me the time when the Peregrine Falcon and the Merlin were common in the County. From his garden he informed me he has seen a pair of Carrion Crows in St. Peter's Churchyard, also the Red Backed Shrike, the Cuckoo, and a flock of a hundred or more Lesser Redpolls. Last Autumn he saw some thousands of Linnets near the Camp Schools, and Hawfinches are often to be seen at the back of his house. Seven of these birds were shot not long since by Mr. Watson, florist, of St. Albans, when feeding on a Quickset Hedge in his plantations. My last records are that a Quail was brought to Mr. Spary by a policeman in May of last year. It was found outside the Post Office, evidently having come in contact with the telegraph wires. An Egyptian Goose was also brought to Mr. Spary

in the flesh not so long ago, but it is thought it was an escaped bird, yet it was an adult. I made another call this evening where I believed some birds were on view. In one case I noticed a female Pheasant, a Nightjar, a Cuckoo, a Black Tern, and one or two smaller birds. In another case I had the pleasure of observing a male Hoopoe. These specimens were, I believe, all obtained in Bedfordshire. I have far exceeded the space intended to be devoted to my diary under one date, but in the study of Natural History fresh sights and sounds crop up unexpectedly, which ease the tension, and make life worth living.

18th.—At this season of the year Clinton Scollard's verses "In February" are very opportune. Here is one:—

"We long for the green and white on the orchard spray,
For the rustle of grass and the Cricket shrilling low,
And yet we can wait, for under the rime we know
Is the living heart that will quicken again in May."

It was beautiful to ramble abroad this morning in the warm sunshine, but some lanes I found impassable. Dampness under foot, however, was hardly objectionable, for the Skylarks, Robins, and Hedge Sparrows were singing quite gaily, and so engaging our every attention. I heard a



KESTREL.

Woodpecker "langhing," some Jays startling everything within sound of their sentinel cry, and a Carrion Crow "went over." The male blossom of the Hazel is out, but I could perceive no female tufts of red as yet. The Sallow, far better known as Palm, is just unrolling its silver blossoms. Many *pairs* of Chaffinches seen. The ditches are full of water, and the hedgerows have all been trimmed. How exquisite the red breasts of the Robins! These birds appear

almost at every turn. It is difficult to distinguish the sexes.

In a meadow where a stream runs its winding course, and where banks of mud had been thrown up, I spotted a magnificent pair of Mistletoe Thrushes. I watched them for some minutes feeding, but they caught sight of me and were off. What a fine breast the male bird has!



Printmaker

FEBRUARY FILL-DYKE.

How glad it makes one feel to see the young Lambs for the first time. On the hillside they were, quite happy and frolicsome. How pleasant the cries of the youngsters and their mothers, a treble and bass note respectively. Round the fold several Rooks and Starlings were feeding, and, as I stood watching, a Green Plover lapped overhead. The House Sparrows are building, at least I saw one this morning on a roof with a stick in its beak as if she meant business.

The Thrush and Blackbird were silent, but a Great Titmouse was in a tremendous flurry of excitement. He utters a sort of chrrrrrrrrrrr—and then a “pink” like the Chaffinch. How conspicuous he is in his breast of yellow, white cheeks and black collar. A few Yellow Buntings and Sparrows were hawking round some haystacks, and presently a Kestrel appeared up aloft. He sailed round, then appeared on tremulous wings hovering like a Skylark, then motionless. I was anxiously waiting for the lightning dash to the earth, but it did not come, and he shook himself and passed out of sight. I saw a pair of Coal Tits; they uttered a very weak, squeaking sort of note.

I forgot to mention that on the 17th I found in my garden a caterpillar of the Wall Butterfly; it was hibernating in some decaying leaves. This afternoon a friend called to tell me a Robin was in his garden and could not fly. I brought the bird into the house. It was a female, and I should say a last year's bird. Its tail feathers were very wet and matted, otherwise it seemed well, with plenty in its crop. In the drawing-room the Redbreast soon made herself at home, hopping along with those long legs at express speed, perching on the chairs and whatnot. She fed on some bread crumbs every now and then, and was as tame as a hand-reared bird. After drying its feathers and giving it a drink of water I set the dapper little bird free.

19th.—On the 13th of this month a colony of Bats emerged from their retreats and flitted about the heads of pedestrians near the Mansion House, London. One or two specimens of the Long-eared Bat were observed.

Mr. J. M. Bacon, the hero of many balloon ascents, tells us that he has found a Blue Fly buzzing about in the air at a height of 8,000 feet. M. C. Flammarion tells of White Butterflies being seen at a height of 3,280 feet. The first-named balloonist remarks that his experience has been that winged creatures of every kind have been left behind long before the first thousand feet were reached. He goes on to say that the height at which the Swift is flying is surmounted with the first leap into space, and even when sailing at the lowest levels

compatible with safety the Skylark is neither seen nor heard. Very possibly, however, all creatures of the air take alarm at a balloon, and naturally give it a wide berth.

It is very charming at this time of the year to be in the neighbourhood of the sea and watch the Gulls on the green pasture land and the rich brown fallows. Their delicate silvers and greys, blacks and whites, are beautifully thrown off against the green and brown background, and one cannot fail to be struck by their exquisite beauty, for by the sea the delicate shades are somewhat neutralised and lost.

Very wet to-day, but Skylark singing joyously. I have noticed many times that the Lark soars and sings in wet weather, and will leave off temporarily on bright, sunny days. How is this to be explained?

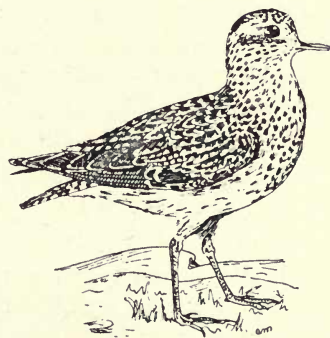
20th.—Mr. Frohawk records in "The Zoologist" the capture of a Little Gull on the Thames at Southend in December last, and a correspondent of "The Field" states that whilst out shooting lately he observed a Peacock Butterfly when four inches of snow was on the ground! This beautiful Butterfly hibernates very often.

A Grey Headed Wagtail was seen in Suffolk recently, and several Goosanders have been shot, one having a fair-sized Jack in his gullet.

21st.—I saw in a poulterer's shop in London to-day the following birds:—Golden Plover, Lapwing, Skylark, Heron, Ptarmigan, Ring Dove, Wild Duck, and Widgeon.

A correspondent writing to a London paper remarks that he had over 40 Starlings, 5 Goldfinches, 2 Thrushes, 1 Blackbird, 3 Crows, and several Sparrows and Tits, all waiting in a small tree in the evident hope of being fed! What an interesting feathered gathering.

A writer in the "Spectator" gives the following interesting information:—"At the present moment the Black Throated Divers, or 'Sprat Loons,' are catching the Sprat Shoals of Norfolk; Great Northern Divers are harrying Flounders in the Wash, Goosanders and Mergansers ('Sawyers' the fishermen call them, from their saw-like teeth) are busy in the estuaries, having long



GOLDEN PLOVER.

ago left the Northern Lochs, where they breed, while Grebes, many in sort, Razorbills, Auks, Guillemots, Cormorants, and Gulls, are at work among the Herrings and Eels; Scaup Ducks, Scoters, and Eiders are diving for Mussels and Whelks, and the sky-mounting Gannets are piercing every surface-swimming fish that moves under their keen eyes far out on the open sea."

22nd.—Robin, Skylark, and Hedge Sparrow singing.

I saw to-day in poulterer's shop, in London, a Sparrow Hawk! There were also some Black Grouse. Golden Plovers are selling at 8d. each. Their gold-speckled and white Winter plumage is indeed beautiful.

It is interesting to note there are about 12,000 known species of birds.

23rd.—Raining. Skylark soaring and singing. Bulbs pushing through nicely now. Snow all gone.

An extraordinary occurrence was brought to my notice to-day, which clearly shows what the recent severe weather has driven the birds to. A Black-Headed Gull seized a Pied Wagtail, battered it to death, broke it up, and swallowed it!

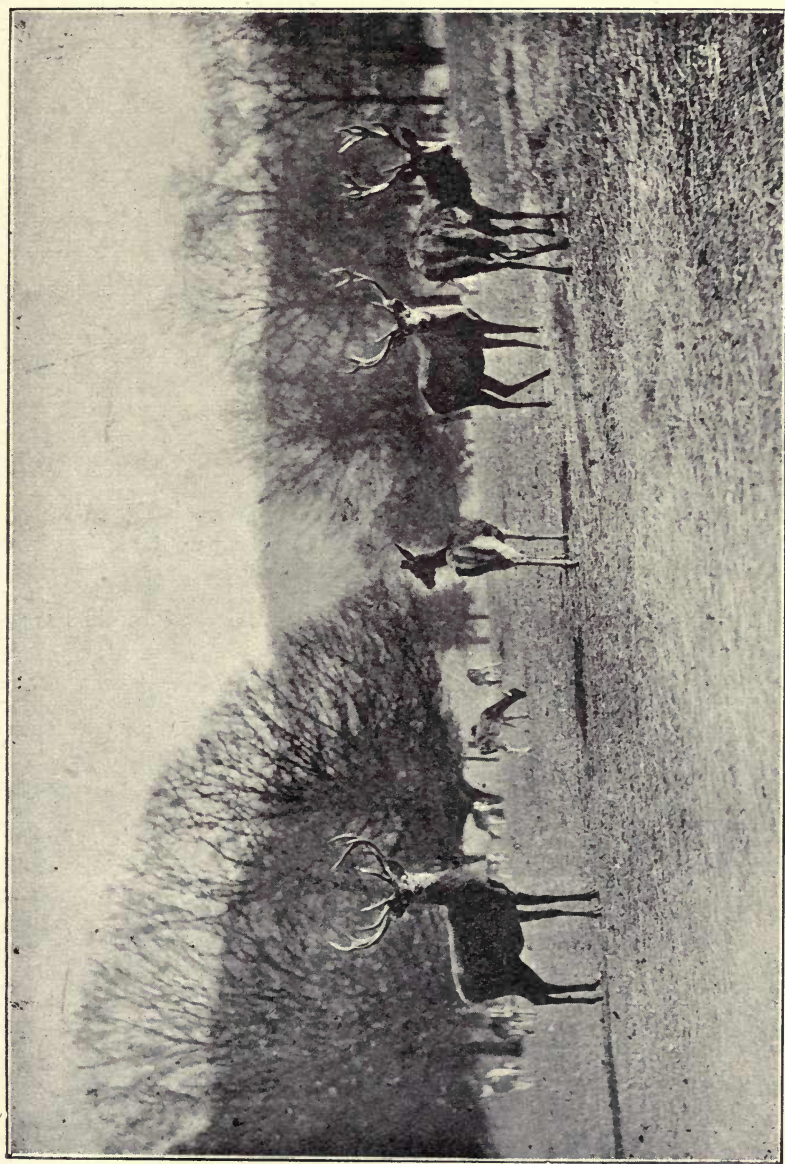
With the thermometer below zero, and a biting North wind, is it not curious that the Skylark still soars and sings! In February, no doubt these song-flights in all weathers—rain, hail, or snow, storm or sunshine—are undertaken to attract and court partners for the ensuing season, and the strains uttered, therefore, become love's old sweet song. A female Lark is upon the ground not knowing which way to turn as she has so many admirers and so many sweethearts; first one male bird and then another chases her and struts proudly before her; then one after another they rise in the air and endeavour to outvie each other in their sweet cadences.

24th.—A friend reports to me that he heard a Chaffinch singing yesterday for the first time this season.

At 5.45 a.m. I heard a Skylark singing. The old adage "up with the Lark" is not far wrong; he is no doubt very early abroad. The Snowdrops are out, and the golden, purple, and white buds of the Crocuses are now to be seen.

25th.—Like a May morning. The female Nut Hazel blossom is out, and the green blossom of the male is rapidly changing to golden.

Birds singing:—Blackbird, Skylark, Chaffinch, Robin, Hedge Sparrow, Song and Mistle Thrushes.



RED DEER.

I saw a tree of Traveller's Joy to-day in a wood which was quite 50 feet high! Pleasurably surprised to observe a pair of Stonechats along a high road. The male was in exquisite plumage. They were very lively, catching Gnats and flying in and out of the hedgerows. Curious to relate, I again saw a Kestrel to-day in exactly the same locality and same time as reported in my diary of a week ago (18th). The Firs are very beautiful just now.

Skylarks singing everywhere. Some Holly berries still to be seen. A stray heap of snow here and there.

A few Worms seen "on top."

The sentinels of the woods—the Blackbird and Jay—to be heard screaming.

The ditches are full of water, and the music of the bubbling brooks and trickling rivulets is one of the pleasantest of rural sounds just at this season.

The Primroses are out in the garden.

I saw at a friend's house to-day an albino Great Tit. A little yellow was on the under-breast, but for the most part the specimen was a very curious illustration of albinism.

I heard and saw Long-eared Owl this evening, and an old Frog was hopping about at dusk.

In a small garden in the centre of this city (St. Albans) I heard or saw the following birds to-day: Rook, Starling, Wren, Robin, Hedge and House Sparrows, Chaffinch, Ring Dove, Coal Tit, Song Thrush, Blackbird, and Great Tit.

A note or two picked up to-day:—

Hawfinches feed on Pupæ as well as Peas.

Jackdaws are very fond of young Sparrows, and plunder their nests wholesale.

Has the reader ever noticed the curious battle axe shaped wing feathers of the Hawfinch?

26th.—Raining, but Lark singing. Why does this bird sing in such dismal weather?

27th.—Raining in torrents, but does not damp the ardour of the Lark. It must be that the reason of this continual singing is for a partner. Hedge Sparrow and Robin heard.

28th.—February, 1900, has been a month of snow and sunshine, rain and sleet, and gales, and it is some years since February Fill-dyke has been so worthy of its name. It is 20 years since we have experienced such floods in England.

I hear to-day that four Little Auks were captured at Scarborough during the recent severe weather. I had one brought to me alive in January, 1894. It was taken in Bedfordshire.

MARCH.



SUNSHINE AND STORM.

MARCH.

"Go, March winds, blow the clouds away!
That April with her sunny smile,
May come, and all our hearts beguile."

1st.—The Lion did not arrive to-day, neither did the proverbia Lamb; it was a sort of go-between. Some wind, but nice open day. A little snow and hail fell. Very cold. Birds rather silent to-day.

2nd.—Rain and snow, but Skylark still sings on.

3rd.—Very cold; but I heard the sweetest-voiced Song Thrush imaginable this morning. Hedge Sparrow and Robin singing.

I received a letter to-day from a gamekeeper friend, who procured for me last month a Ring Dove and a House Sparrow for the purpose of examining their crops. In the former he found nothing but Ivy berries, and in the latter a few grains of Wheat, Oats, and one or two small buds, probably Currant buds.

I nearly trod upon a Lark to-day; he soared aloft and sung deliciously, but what is this bird language? He could not have been happy because I had disturbed him! We do not surely understand bird nature any more than we do human nature. The Blackbird is very silent.

4th.—Just to remind us that the Spring has not yet arrived, we had a snow and hail storm this morning. Dr. Greene writes me to day that a pair of Blackbirds have at the present time a nest in the Ivy on his garden wall (Belvedere, Kent).

The Sparrows are dusting, or rather mudding, in the garden. I went a long ramble through some woods to-day, but have not much to report. The wild growing Snowdrops enlivened the somewhat dismal surroundings with their snow-white heads, and the Wild

Hyacinths are well through in the woods, although, of course, they will not be in flower for some few weeks yet. The Primroses are coming along nicely. The Common Wren was singing, and I heard, and saw, some Jays.

I found a solitary Moorhen on a small pond. The friend I was with told me he shot seven Landrails in one day at Baldock, Herts, last September. Several bundles of faggots attracted my attention as a likely spot for early nests, but none presented themselves.

On the Fir trees we noticed the gum, and marvel that countless ages and the action of sea water results in the production of Amber. The gum becomes fossilised, and embedded therein many species of insects, which have long ceased to exist, have been discovered in a perfectly mummified state.

The Almond blossom will soon be out—first brown, then pale yellow, shortly pink; the flowers appear before the foliage.

6th.—Hedge Sparrows singing cheerily in the garden. The Chaffinch is in beautiful song now. A Mistle Thrush is singing daily close to my house; he perches on the topmost branches of an Oak, and pours out a loud, but little varied, song. The hedgerows look as if a few days of warm sunshine would bring out the fresh green flush of Spring. A Manchester friend writes me to-day that he saw recently in his garden, in St. Anne's Street, a Great Tit, Marsh Tit, and Coal Tit, all on one tree at the same time.

7th.—Our thoughts wander to the Migrants now, and I have made out the following list. Any corrections or suggestions for making the same as complete as possible will be much esteemed by the author of this volume.

A LIST OF SUMMER VISITORS TO THE BRITISH ISLES.

Ranged somewhat in the order in which they appear.

- 1.—Spotted Crane March.
- 2.—Ring Ouzel. End of March, or beginning of April.
- 3.—Wheatear. End of March.
- 4.—Stone Curlew. March, April, and early in May. Some of these birds are said to remain with us all the year round.
- 5.—Chiff Chaff. End of March.
- 6.—Yellow Wagtail. End of March or early in April.
- 7.—Sand Martin. Early in April, generally before the Swallow or House Martin.
- 8.—Swallow. Middle of April.

- 9.—House Martin. About April 20th, usually a little later than the Swallow.
- 10.—Redstart. Beginning to middle of April.
- 11.—Grasshopper Warbler. Middle of April.
- 12.—Whinchat. From middle to end of April, sometimes as late as May.
- 13.—Blackcap. Middle of April.
- 14.—Nightingale. Middle of April; males arrive about ten days before the females.
- 15.—Hobby Falcon. Appears in April.
- 16.—Wryneck. First or second week in April, generally a few days before the Cuckoo, hence it is called the Cuckoo's Mate, or Messenger.
- 17.—Cuckoo. In April come he will.
- 18.—Tree Pipit. About middle of April.
- 19.—Common Sandpiper. „ „ April.
- 20.—Lesser Whitethroat. About middle of April, sometimes earlier.
- 21.—Greater Whitethroat. About middle to end of April.
- 22.—Willow Warbler. Second week in April, although it is often recorded as early as March.
- 23.—Kentish Plover. April or May.
- 24.—Corncrake. Last week in April.
- 25.—Red-backed Shrike. End of April, beginning of May.
- 26.—Sedge Warbler. Latter part of April.
- 27.—Garden Warbler. End of April or early in May.
- 28.—Reed Warbler. End of April or early in May.
- 29.—Wood Warbler. End of April or early in May.
- 30.—Turtle Dove. Latter part of April.
- 31.—Quail. During May.
- 32.—Swift. Early in May. One of the latest to arrive, and the earliest to depart.
- 33.—Spotted Flycatcher. 7th to 20th of May.
- 34.—Pied Flycatcher. May.
- 35.—Nightjar. About the middle to end of May.
- 36.—Marsh Warbler. About the middle of May.
- 8th.—Song Thrushes singing everywhere, also Common Wren.
- Mistle Thrush singing loud and long.

Many people are not aware that the Badger is a distant relation of the Bears. He is the largest of our indigenous carnivora. Since November last he has been hibernating, but the first mild day now he



SONG THRUSH.

will be tempted out. His diet is a curious one, consisting as it does of Eggs, young Rabbits, Fruit, Roots, Vegetables, Worms, Insects, Snails, and Frogs.

9th.—The buds on my Currant bushes look like bursting very shortly, and on the first warm day my Crocuses will be out in a blaze of splendour.

Nice March weather now, which, after recent wet, will dry the land and prepare everything as it should be.

The birds do not come in my garden now. That is how they appreciate the care I took of them in the hard weather!

They are busy singing or fighting for partners, and the Rooks have long since started Spring cleaning.

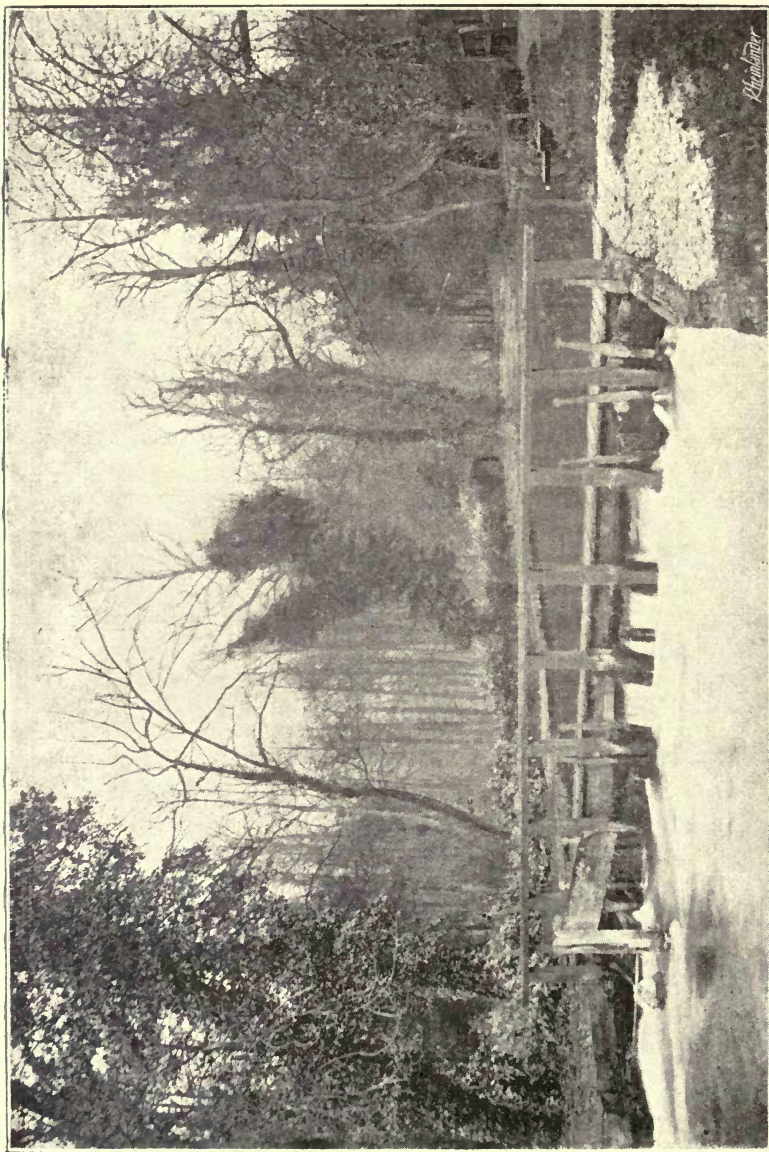
A correspondent in the North writes me to-day that he recently heard the Redwing singing, which he has put into the following:—Ta-see-see, cak-cak, chuck-a-chuck-chuck. R-see, ss-ss.

Mr. W. A. Nicholson, of Portobello, N.B., writes to say he heard the Song Thrush at Liberton, Midlothian, on January 24th. He also states he saw a Water Rat pounce at a Redwing during the recent severe weather, but the bird escaped. My correspondent adds that Rats consume innumerable birds when the ground is frost-bound.

10th.—I see attempts are to be made to re-introduce the Great Bustard into this Country from Spain. The last time an attempt was made was in 1876, and this in Yorkshire and Norfolk.

Clumps of Coltsfoot out on the railway banks. Yellow Jasmine blooming. Many Gnats dancing in the sunlight. Groundsel in flower. Crocuses full open to-day for the first time. Digging in the garden, I found several Caterpillars hibernating about a foot below ground.

11th.—It is Sunday once again, and I must take time by the forelock and be out and about fairly early. Travelling to town early each day, one does not have many opportunities for country rambles, but at the week-ends we may see and hear much that is going on in the Natural History world. In fact, one of the reasons why this little diary is written is to show how a busy person, engaged in business in town during the day, may, by going to work in the right manner, keep a diary and calendar which shall be useful and interesting. My walk to the railway station each morning takes me along the country-side for a short distance, but many a time I look back with longing eyes to the green meadows behind me, and hear the last faint melodies of



IVY CLAD TREES.

a sweet-voiced Thrush in the distance, and wish I was going from, instead of to, the station. Thus my notes from Monday until Saturday must necessarily be somewhat limited, but by paying much attention to Natural History, and being with Nature most of the Sabbath in each week, I hope to engross the attention of the reader, and set on record many useful observations in a simple, accurate, and popular style. Well, it is Sunday to-day, and on going into my garden early this morning I heard a Chaffinch in a terrible state of excitement, "pinking" for his very life. Whether a rival had appeared upon the scene I cannot say, or whether his partner was about and was advancing too near to human kind to please him of the rosy breast, I do not know, but this was the first sound which caught my ear when I inhaled the fresh, sweet breath of early morn. It is a very nice day, not much sunshine, but by no means cold or cheerless. Going across some meadow land to reach some woods I natularise in, I found crawling across the pathway a large Water Beetle (*Dyticus Marginalis*). How extraordinary these Beetles look when one turns them on their backs; how curious their antics in order to regain control of their legs; when in such positions they seem to have solved the problem of perpetual motion. Reaching some newly-ploughed land, I noticed a Pied Wagtail or two disporting themselves on top of the clods. The leaves of the Honeysucke are all unrolled now. Several Greet Tits were to be heard singing, and I watched a pair of Nuthatches with much interest. The male was for ever uttering a loud note, something like. "Do it, do it, do it, do it." *ab lib*. I also saw the Tree Creeper. How its brown back harmonises with the bark of the tree it is traversing, and how busy the little creature is scrutinising for the luscious Insect or its Larvæ. The Creeper worked away without uttering a single note; it seems to me to be a very silent bird. A pair of Ring Doves kept circling round, high above me; when they stop suddenly, Hawk-like, and then flap off again, the noise made by their wings is very distinct, just as if someone was clapping hands. The Rhododendrons are all budded very strongly, and it looks as if



SWEET SMELLING VIOLETS.



A PAIR OF WRENS.

there will be a splendid June show; in the woods where I rambled to-day they were very prolific. The Rooks were at their nest trees, and the eggs have in some cases, I should think, already been laid. Some couples were still bringing fresh materials, but for the most part all the nests in the rookery look complete. Walking across a field in sight of the Rooks I held my stick under my arm like a gun, and what a commotion ensued, to be sure. Half a minute afterwards not a rook was in sight, and I must have been 200 yards away! The Cuckoo Pint, or Wild Arum, is well through now, as is also the Burdock. Woodpeckers were "laughing" every now and then, and Jays "shrieking," Coal Tits "squeaking," Ring Doves "cooing." By the way, the workmanship in a Rook's nest, as looked at through field-glasses, is very wonderful. Especially now, when there is no foliage on the trees.

In came across a large clump of Privet in the wood. There were no berries to be seen; I suppose the birds had them all during the severe weather of last month. The various Lichens are very beautiful and well worth a careful study just now.

I have pleasure in recording that I found my first nests of 1900 to-day. I almost searched with a faint heart, but at last I was rewarded by finding what was apparently a Blackbird's nest, about half-built, in a Rhododendron. Later, in a thick Laurel bush, I found a Song Thrush's homestead nearly ready for those delicate blue and freckled eggs. By next Sunday I hope to report progress. They are the earliest nests I have ever found. How glad it makes a bird-lover feel to light upon his first nest of the season, especially after he has been searching hours in vain! Rabbits scampered out of the bracken and the undergrowth at the sound of my footsteps as I trod on the dead crackling branches and leaves. The white, cocked-up tail is decidedly prominent when they are running. The Laurel is in flower, and the Ivy is in its beauty just now. It is very heavily laden with berries too. In the woods I noticed about half-a-dozen Aspen trees. The male inflorescence is very beautiful, as it tosses and nods in the March breezes. I do not think this tree is at all common; at least this is the first time I have seen it hereabouts. Truly we may live and learn.

Rabbit-flick presented itself very frequently in the woods, the Acorns are shooting, and the Beech buds are bursting. It was so mild I sat down with my friends and listened to the melodies of a Song Thrush. That particular bird fairly surpassed himself, and it is worth walking miles to hear such a musician. Rooks, Starlings.

Ring Doves, and Mistle Thrushes were continually passing. In among the dead leaves several small Spiders did not escape attention.

The Woodruff is well through. Not much wind; it wants some nice winds to blow the pollen from the male Hazel blossom into the female so that fertilisation may be perfected. We shake a few branches, and thus lend a helping hand to Nature.

The cones on the Firs look very prominent against the green-needled background. There were many Firs where we rambled to-day. I mean to search for the Golden-crested Wren's nest under those pliant branches later on.

I found a solitary Primrose out in the woods; it looked so cold and lonely, but very soon now will have some companions. The golden Crocuses in the cottagers' gardens looked very bright and lovely to-day against the rich red and brown soil of drying March.

13th.—Very dull day, raining, and blowing hard. Birds silent, though Song Thrush was singing gaily at 6.30 p.m.

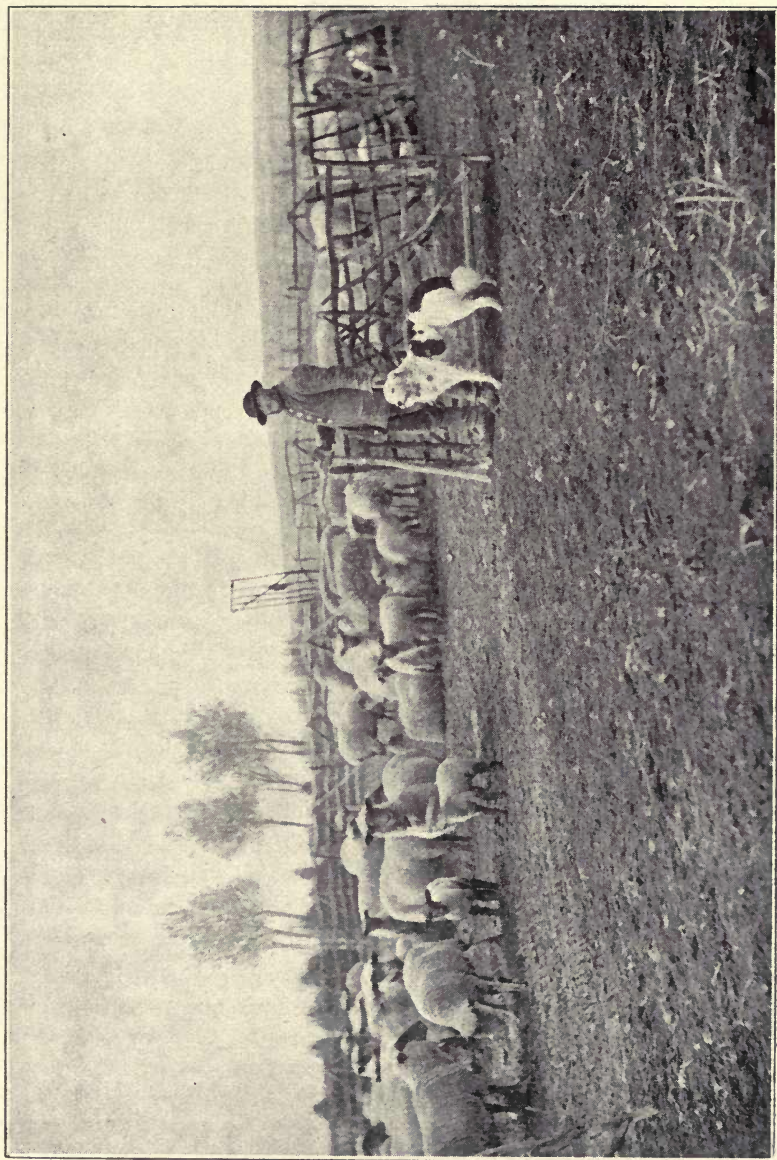
14th.—Typical March weather now. Wintry, dry, and cold. Birds silent again for the most part. I have not heard the Skylark or the Robin for the last few days.

15th.—Hedge Sparrow, Lark, and Song Thrush singing. Much warmer. A list of Butterflies one may possibly see during this month may be useful. They are as follows:—Small Garden White, Brimstone, Comma, Large Tortoiseshell, Small Tortoiseshell, Peacock, Camberwell Beauty, and the Azure or Holly Blue.

Generally speaking, not much difference is observed in the Butterfly world than that of February, that is, of course, as regards those seen in an imago state, but next month our list will be considerably larger, and will then commence in real earnest. Those species I have set out have been seen during this month, and even earlier, but the reader must not be surprised or disappointed if neither of them are forthcoming. So much depends on the weather.

It is interesting to note that there are about 70 British Butterflies and about 180 regular British breeding Birds.

16th.—The Song Thrush singing at 6.15 p.m. It has been very cold to-day, and to-night I have been in a snowstorm! The wind was due North, and extremely biting and cold. This will keep the birds back a bit. When I saw those flakes again my enthusiasm went right down below zero, if I may be so understood.



A HERTFORDSHIRE SHEEPFOLD.

A friend tells me that when fishing in the Ver last year a Bat seized his bait as it was dropping into the water. It was just getting dusk, and he pulled his line in to find, to his surprise, one of these extraordinary creatures firmly hooked. He was baiting with dough. I have known Swallows and Martins do this, but it is the first occasion that I have heard of the Bat.

17th.—The House Sparrows are very busy with household duties now. They have to-day been tugging away at the dead and withered stalks and grasses in the garden, and they have a special liking for the withered fronds of the Ferns.

Ground covered with snow again during last night, accompanied by a very sharp frost. These frosts had better come now than later on.

The sun is very powerful, and it had not been out long before ploughing was taking place near to my house, reminding us once again of the coming of Spring.

Travelling in the train to-day, I noticed some Lambs frolicking on a green hillside. How strong they are getting, and how peaceful the scene.

The leaves are heaped up in the parks, and what tales they could tell if only they could speak! Perchance of the picnic parties held underneath the pliant branches on which the leaves once hung in such exquisite festoons; of the attentive lovers who strolled along the grove at an hour when Titania and her graceful attendants might have been looked for sporting on the green; of the old Naturalist who stood and admired that grand old Oak, that tall Poplar, that well-developed Beech and Elm; of the gambols of the school children, their merry peals of laughter, joy, and mirth, in the enjoyment of such delightful freedom; and many, many more pleasant memories do these fallen tresses of past Summers bring to mind.

18th.—A white frost was presented to view when I turned out this morning. The trees and hedgerows were a picture in their crystal covering, but the sun soon put an end to the icy Winter look, and by 10 a.m. it was again more like Springtime.

I put up a pair of Yellow Buntings on some grass land. The alarm note is something like that of the Pied Wagtail, and sounds, when uttered on the wing and otherwise, like "Tisit, titit, titit."

Chaffinch in beautiful song now, and the Hedge Sparrow, Robin, and Skylark singing almost without cessation.

The love note of the Partridge is a curious one, I must confess. It disturbed a couple spooning this morning by the hedge-side. It is quite impossible to write a description of the note. It is a deep, complaining sort of guttural note. That is the best I can do.

The Song Thrush's nest I reported on the 11th March, as ready for eggs, I again visited to-day. It contained four eggs! The other nest referred to in my diary of the same date turns out now to be another Song Thrush's, and not a Blackbird's; and this, too, is now ready for eggs. These are two of the earliest nests of this bird that I have ever found, especially as the season this year is by no means early.

How glad it makes one feel to again see those beautiful blue eggs, ink spotted over; it spurs one on for brighter days.

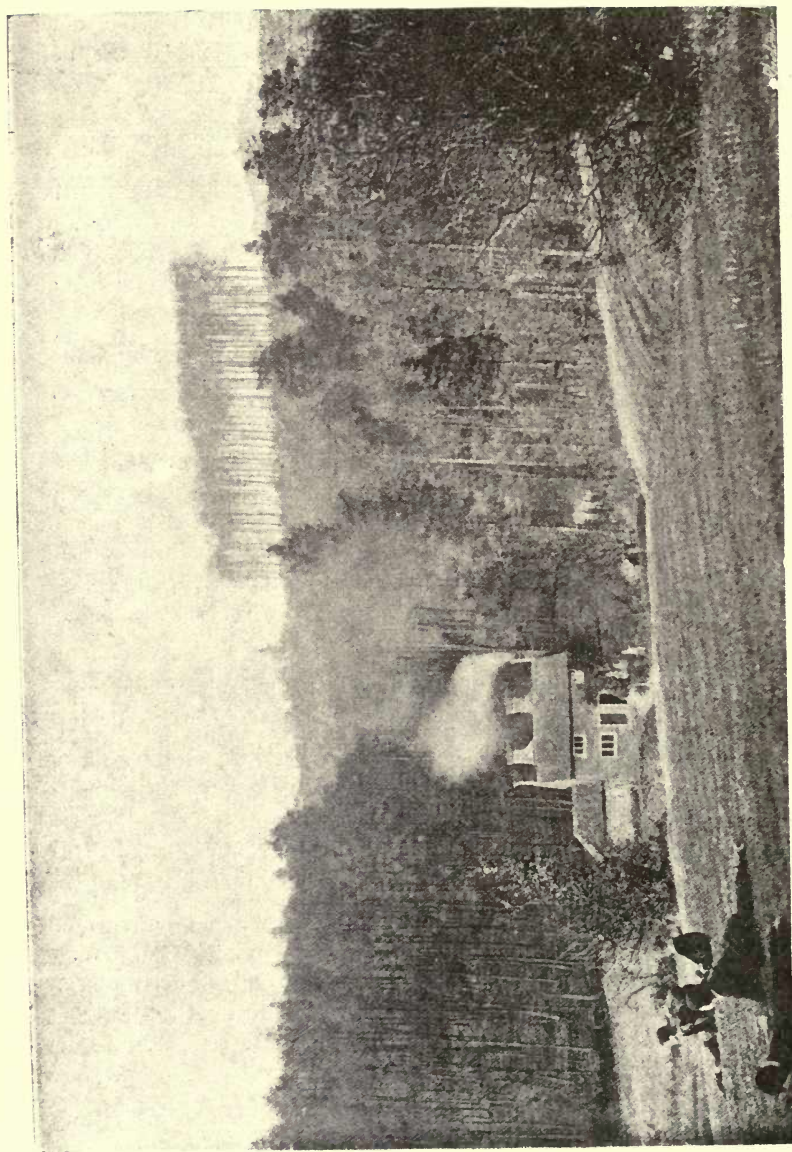
The Nuthatch was to be seen at work on the tall trees skirting a drive. What a curious zig-zag sort of flight it possesses! I watched a pair of Mute Swans on a farm pond to-day; they looked cold and miserable, and by no means in the best of tempers. One or other of them, and sometimes both, had a leg right across the back—is not the structure of a Swan's leg very wonderful to enable it to do this?—as if resting it, and with the head nestled in the wing looked a picture of abject misery.

I wathed a Chaffinch flitting on and off the rails of the cattle-pens. What an example of animal intelligence! The wee little bird went within an inch or two of a great black, fierce-looking Bullock time after time, and the only living things it seemed to be frightened of were my friend and myself studying it through the glasses.

Ice on troughs frozen; the cattle in the fields came up and broke the ice, and quaffed to their hearts' content.

Yellow Bunting singing "A little bit of bread, and no cheese." Many Rooks dibbing on some land sown with Winter Oats. Were they after the grain or the grub? The bailiff with whom I rambled to-day signified his disapproval by firing at "the black devils." He owned, however, that for the most part Rooks are highly beneficial birds.

The number of Song Thrushes about to-day, extraordinary; they cropped up at every turn. Much more prevalent than Blackbirds. Wood Pigeons "flopping" through the tall Firs; Lapwings on the pasture lands, wheeling round and crying "Peewit." Green Wood-



GIANT FIRS.

pecker "laughing." Common Wren singing, but not strongly. Wind, E. to N.E. Towards evening a regular snow blizzard raged for over two hours, covering the ground to a depth of three or four inches. Snowstorms and wild birds' eggs!!

19th.—Country-side clothed in whiteness again. Pied Wagtail came up to the back door early this morning for scraps of food, and the House Sparrows perched on the roof with shrugged shoulders, as if they much resent the interference by the clerk of the weather. It upsets their household arrangements without a doubt. In spite of King Winter being here again, Chaffinch and Lark singing.

Sun very powerful, and by evening snow all gone.

20th.—A lovely day. Most birds singing. A beautiful blood-red sunset at 6 p.m.

21st.—"Spring commences"; at least, so says my Calendar, and, for a wonder, the weather to-day has been in keeping with the Calendar.

I was tempted out in the garden early by the brilliant sunshine, and did a bit of gardening. Chaffinch "pinking." How delicate-looking the first Snowdrop as it peeps through the brown earth!

"You ask why Spring's fair first-born flower is white:
Peering from out the warm earth long ago.
It saw above its head great drifts of snow,
And blanched with fright."

CLINTON SCOLLARD.

Very cold towards evening, but a gorgeous golden-red sunset. An ideal Spring day.

22nd.—Very dull and cheerless, but Lark and Hedge Sparrow singing. I have not heard the Thrush the last few days.

Mr. Nicholson, of Portobello, N.B., writes me to-day as to my recent remarks about the House Sparrow (January 26th):—

"Weather here very cold and rainy, observing birds numbing work, hunting insects and cocoons, much worse. This morning a Skylark rose from a meadow, and in the teeth of an Easterly gale of wind sang its joyful song, and kept it up for some minutes. It was raining hard at the time, and the cold was intense.

"Referring to the opinions you gave recently as to the Sparrows feeding in the garden, there is no doubt he is an artful creature, but



MORE RED DEER,

Reynolds

the Sparrows in our district do not seem to have the same habits as the ones spoken of by 'Rusticus.' If a piece of twine with a white rag is tied to one of the branches, the Sparrows do not visit that tree for three days or so, but if it (the rag) is allowed to remain, they land on the branches as usual. In my opinion 'Rusticus' has not watched them long enough before giving his verdict."

23rd.—Very cold East wind. The Daffodils in the woods and meadows are bursting, as also White Rock Cress in the garden, and it only wants some nice warm days to fully open the leaves of the Fruit bushes. Wind and rain have spoiled my show of Crocuses. The Mint is through; the Wallflower blooms are nearly ready to burst; White Lilies well up; Violets blooming. Wind veered round later in day to N.

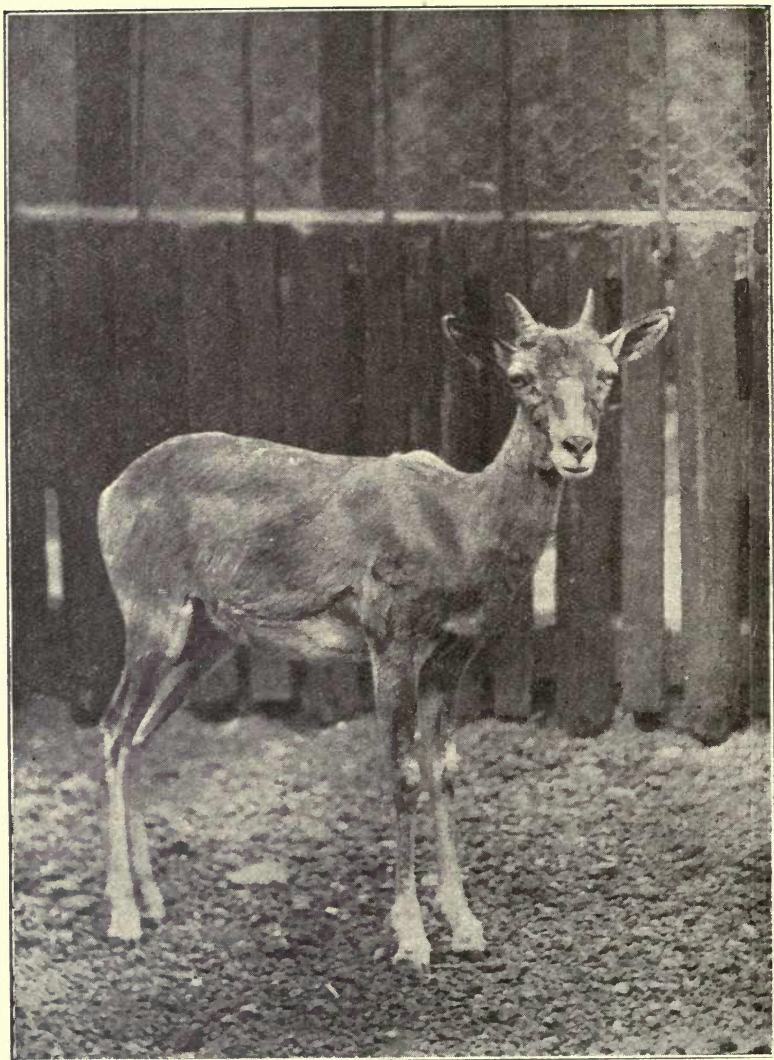


DAFFODILS.

Afraid we shall have more snow, Starling under the gables chattering, and I believe nesting. The Sparrows do not often come into the garden to feed now, but they did this afternoon. The Robin has left the precincts of my garden for the nesting season. I shall not see much of him now until the Autumn. I say "him" advisedly, as it is rarely a female Robin visits me.

24th.—Hedge Sparrow singing in the garden. Very cold and windy; a typical March day. Digging in the garden to-day I was struck with the quantity of Earthworms. Nice sunshine towards evening, but very cold. I found two Pupæ in the garden this afternoon; one was hibernating in the ground, and the second one behind some dead Geranium leaves. The latter I could not identify, the other was that of the Heart and Dart Moth I think.

25th.—The Elder is quite green now. Wren singing. Found nest of the Field Mouse; nobody at home when I called. Found dead Rabbit in the woods. On knocking a piece off a rotten tree, many Earwigs to be observed; very long ones. Still four eggs in the Thrush's nest reported on the 18th. The male bird was "on," sitting very closely. How delicate the throat peeping just over the rim



PUNJAUB WILD SHEEP AT THE ZOO. (FEMALE).

of the nest! There should be young in a few days now. There were no eggs in the other Thrush's nest written about on the 18th of the month. Heard the Nuthatch calling, and the Ring Doves cooing in the tall Firs. Hedge Sparrow in the garden singing most of the day. Dull and cheerless in the woods. Wild Hyacinths making rapid headway; a few Primroses out. The Sallow will be well out by Easter. Along a sheltered hedge I saw just a trace of the green Spring flush. Blue Tits busy in the Lichen bearing trees. Chaffinch "pinking"; Skylark and Song Thrush singing. Wood Sorrel leaves peeping through. Many old nests in the woods. Hereabouts it is new ground to me, and the quantity of old homesteads augurs well a little later. Horse Chestnut buds well-formed, and will soon open with some nice warm sunshine. A similar remark applies to the Sycamore.

I listened anxiously in the woods for the Chiff Chaff, and looked eagerly for the Wheatear elsewhere, but am afraid this cold weather will keep them silent, even if they are here yet. The strong winds forced a Song Thrush's nest and eggs from its position in a tall tree near here on the 20th. It contained four eggs; two of them were no worse for their fall; the remaining two were broken. I might just add that the notes contained in this diary always refer, unless otherwise mentioned, to St. Albans, Hertfordshire, and the surrounding neighbourhood. Readers would do well to bear this in mind when perusing these unpretentious notes and queries. I think they shew that even in a somewhat restricted area, there is much to interest, elevate, and amuse.

26th.—Hedge Sparrow singing and picking up tit-bits in my garden. N. winds. Heavy snow and hail during the day. Chaffinches on some newly-ploughed and recently sown land; was it the seed they were after? Song Thrush singing. Blue Titmouse in the garden. Rooks passing from North to South, and *vice versa*. This is the Lark singing season. They will never be in finer trim than they are now; it is Larks everywhere; the air is full of their sweet songs. Frost last night. Travelling on the Midland Railway from London to St. Albans, I saw a very fine Sparrow Hawk between Elstree and Mill Hill. They tell me the Ewes have not lambed very well in this district.

28th.—Two or three inches of snow fell last night. This snow, rain, hail, wind, and sleet, has completely spoiled my show of Crocuses. They have never once had a fair start this Winter.

Skylark singing in spite of Wintry surroundings. Some of the Summer Migrants may be seen, but I doubt if any will exercise their vocal power whilst this weather lasts.

Mistle Thrush singing, but he is going off, and will soon be quite silent. Instead of improving in song, like the majority of birds now, the Mistle is an exception to the rule, and ceases in March. Can this be explained? He will resume about July. There is very little variety in his song; if you disturb him he flits into the highest branches of the next tree, and starts singing again, and will do this many times without ceasing.

29th.—Sharp frost last night, but lovely mornings now, full of brilliant sunshine. Pair of Chaffinches in the garden. The call of the hen bird is like that of the cock Bullfinch—a plaintive, weeping sort of note, which contrasts very strangely with the shrill reply of the male Chaffinch. The consciousness of protection of the Hedge Sparrow is very marked. One in the garden this morning allowed me to pass within a few feet of him. How delicate the grey, greyish-blue, and brown plumage! I whistled a few notes to him, which such a sweet little warbler doubtless thought very rough and rugged.

I spent an hour or two at the Zoological Gardens in Regent's Park, London, to-day, and I could not have had a more beautiful day for my visit.

The Park itself was very fresh and green, and the patches of white, yellow, and purple Crocuses, planted in amongst the fresh green grass, looked very lovely indeed. There will be a grand show of Hyacinths, Tulips, and other Spring flowers a little later, as the broad and other walks are teeming with well-planned beds of these Bulbs. I had hardly stepped into the Park before I heard a Song Thrush in fairly good tune, and, a little later, the alarm cry of a male Blackbird. I suspect he had a nest in one of the evergreens somewhere. The Yellow Jasmine was blooming nicely, and I noticed a few Rooks on the more open ground through the trees. Wood Pigeons were cooing loudly—what a truly rural sound, and how different to the rush and tear of Tottenham Court Road not many hundred yards away—and several Robins were in full song. The Almond blossom was well out, and the Lilac leaves almost opened.

Now as to the collection of animals, &c., located in the Gardens, I do not pretend to write a full account of the (about) 2,500 specimens usually on exhibition, neither does this little sketch pretend to be a

guide to the Gardens; that has already been excellently done by Dr. Sclater. I do intend jotting down, however, a few notes of the specimens I saw, with here and there an observation or two as to any peculiarity which struck me. The official "Guide to the Gardens" does not, of course, contain anything like a complete list of the various specimens on view, merely naming, as I take it, the most important representatives of the various groups exhibited. Thus, as at this date, these somewhat detailed notes may be found interesting and useful to my readers.

I propose to mention the specimens just as I came across them, wandering without a guide at my own sweet will, so that no classifications of any kind are made.

A fine pair of Common Buzzards first caught my eye, but my attention was soon distracted from these birds by a glance at the Bateleur Eagle. Was ever there a more extraordinary bird? Singular indeed is its appearance; the brilliant coral-coloured legs and cere, are well set off against the grey, chestnut, and black plumage. The shortness of the tail, too, adds to the attractiveness of this African Eagle. Perching in the splendidly-kept Aviary he looked the picture of health, in the best of plumage, and seemed quite happy and at peace with all the world, but loosen one or two of those iron bars, and there might possibly be another tale to unfold. An impudent House Sparrow, perching on the top bars, did not in any way disturb him. Hereabouts I also saw the Spotted Eagle, White-bellied Sea Eagle, the Condor (the largest representative of its family), Condor Vulture, Cinereous Vulture (from South Europe), Ruppell's Vulture (a most curious Vulture, having a grey fluffy-feathered head, and exceedingly small), Griffon Vulture (one of the best known of the Vultures), which, once upon a time, as the story books say, winged its way in far Morocco or Egypt. The Tawny Eagle is well worth studying, whilst the Slaty Buzzard is a very lovely bird. Not far away I saw the Chilian Sea Eagle, and the White-tailed species, the latter, of course, a British breeding bird, but being slowly exterminated, and the Vociferous Sea Eagle. Vociferous is right, for, as I stood watching, it gave vent to the most unearthly whimpering I ever heard, for all the world like the whining of a dog. The Corean Sea Eagle was the last Eagle I observed in this locality. Turning round, the brown, black, and white of the Sheldrake, or Burrow Duck, met my gaze on one of the Duck ponds, as also the Variegated Sheldrake, Garganey, Teal and Ruddy Sheldrake, asleep on the brick coping at the edge of the water. This bird breeds regularly in the Gardens every year. The Upland

Goose, the male with black legs, and the female possessing yellow ones, was out and about, as also the Ruddy-headed Goose, which differs from the last-named as regards the colour of the legs by the male and female being almost identical. This species and the Ashy-headed Goose, a very near relation to it, has bred in the Gardens of the Society for some considerable time past. I noticed an Otter trying to scratch through into the next compartment, and, hard by, the Glutton—not by any means a nice name to have bestowed upon you. The Cape Ratel evidently believes in working for a living, for he was walking and trotting round and round like a Circus Horse, and had made quite a ring on the straw-strewn floor of his spacious cage, and the while grunting like a Pig. The Prairie Marmot—something like a Rabbit—was tossing straw about for an occupation; whilst Eversmann's Souslik, in a dress of grey, is apparently a very trustful and docile animal. The Racoon was sleeping his life away, dreaming, perchance, of North America, his now lost home; and close at hand was the Sand Badger of Japan, and others of a like species. The Civets are very curious carnivorous animals, and amongst those exhibited I noticed the African Civet Cat, and the large Indian Civet. The former possesses a very sharp-pointed nose, and it is interesting to notice in passing that it is from these obnoxious smelling animals that the perfume named after them is made. The Kite's Aviary includes some very fine specimens, and I observed the Black, Egyptian, and Indian species, and I should mention the Common Kite of the British Isles. This bird is doomed to extinction at no distant date; it is impossible for the bird to hold its own when the hand of every indiscriminate collector, and bird egg dealer, is against it. It is, however, still found pretty generally in Spain and Northern Africa. It was from a piece of newspaper taken from a Kite's nest in Spain that the lamented Lord Lilford first heard of the death of President Lincoln.

The Brazilian Caracaras are rather attractive-looking birds. They are rapacious birds, and inhabit America for the most part.

Lucan's Crested Eagle was uttering notes something after the style of the Sparrow, but decidedly stronger; it is quite a musical note, by no means unpleasant; whilst the Jackal Buzzard, and an Angolan Vulture, did not escape attention.

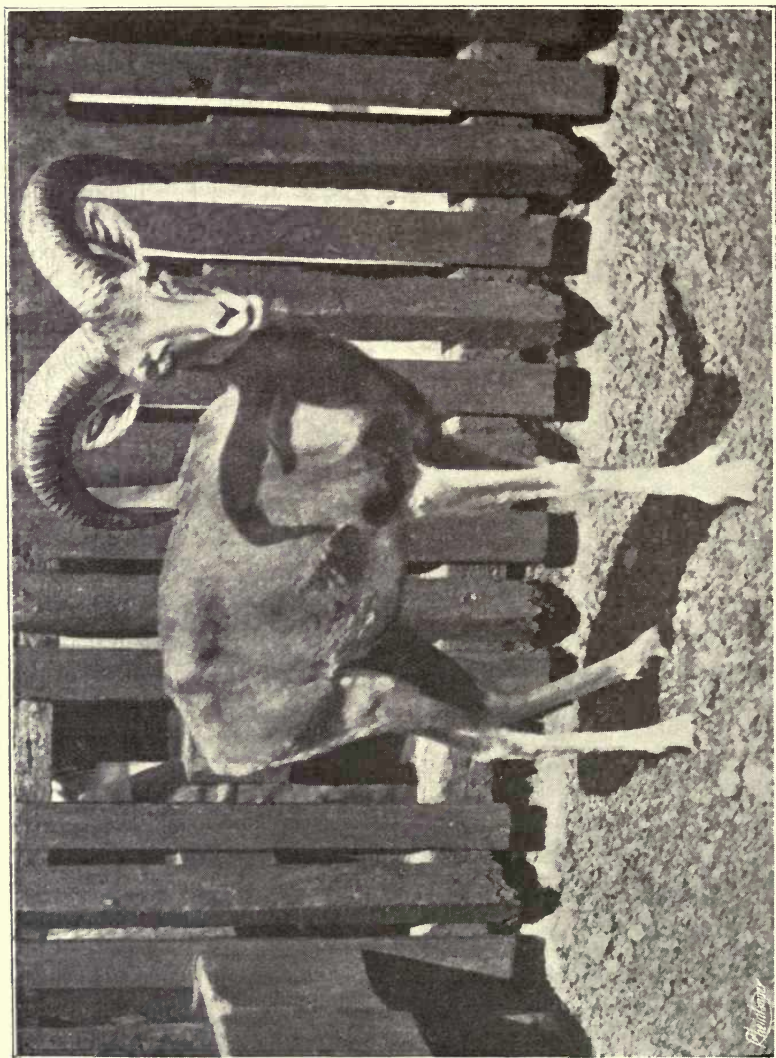
The Otter's cage was a great attraction, and the visitors exhibited evident delight in watching these agile creatures slip off into the water, and up again at some unlooked-for spot. Most interesting indeed, and also to know that a pair were bred in the Gardens in

1846. Hard by, the Mandarin Ducks' pond is located, and here Society-bred specimens of these birds were exhibited, as well as the Marbled Duck of Southern Europe, and the Chilian Pintail of Southern America.

The Guanaco, the curious-faced Llama, and the Alpaca were on view, and I can well believe the statement that their wool has commenced to be recognised as a valuable article of commerce.

The Eagle Aviary contains some very fine examples of our own Golden Eagle; and one of them, taking a necessarily restricted flight, reminded one of the majestic ornament this bird is as it wings its way over the tops of the mountains in the North of our Island. Here, too, were to be seen the Imperial Eagle—as we were observing this bird a cheeky Starling perched on a neighbouring tree, and chattered as if he was lord of all he surveyed, and a Sparrow was seen with a piece of straw in his beak—the White-headed Sea Eagle (the Eagle depicted on the national emblem of the United States of America), and the Bearded Vulture. Passing on to some more Duck ponds, I noticed the Teal, Shoveller, Red-breasted Merganser—the latter did not strike me as being in very good fettle—Smew, Scoter, Baers Ducks—from India—Summer Duck—bred in the Gardens—and overhead an Almond tree was found blossoming beautifully.

Rapidly surveying the Lion house—in which, of course, were Lions and Tigers, Leopards, Pumas—asleep up aloft in the tree branch—Cheetahs, and Jaguars, brings us back to the Aves again, and I noticed the Bernicle Goose, Brent Goose, Canada Variegated Sheldrake, and then on to the Wolves and Foxes. The Red Fox, the Prairie Wolf, the Azaras Fox, the Arctic Fox (quite white) were to be seen, and turning to right-about, Geese were again presented in the Lesser Snow Goose, the Bean Goose, and the Ruddy-headed Goose. Then there were a fine pair of proud Black Swans—the red beak very pronounced against the otherwise black plumage. The Dorcas Goat bowed to me as I passed, and at this moment a Hedge Sparrow started his pretty little warble, as if he did not intend being left out in the cold. I next clapped my eyes on some Punjaub Wild Sheep, the White-fronted Goose, the Chinese Goose, and then on to the Gullery. How delicate the silvers and greys, blacks and whites! How spotlessly clean the Herring Gulls, Glaucous Gulls, Lesser and Greater Black-backed Gulls, and how prominent the yellow beaks of some of the species. A Rook passed overhead at this juncture. I wonder what he thinks of this collection! Probably at this season he



PUNJAB WILD SHEEP AT THE ZOO. (MALE).

is too busy with his own household cares to think of anything outside the family circle.

The Hogs and Swine I can only just mention in passing. The Patagonian Cavy struck me rather, and also the Capybara Porcupine. Hard by, the Crested Cranes were on view, also the Manchurian, Sarus, Common, Australian, and Indian White species. The Storks were not far away, and I saw the White, Black, Maguari, and several other species of these birds. The Ostriches, Rheas, Emus, and Cassowaries must not be overlooked, neither the curious Kiwi or Apteryx, practically a wingless bird. A male Chaffinch was picking up scraps in and about the Storks' domain.

To the Magpies, Jackdaws, and Crows I next directed attention, and saw besides these members of this highly-intelligent Avian family the fast-disappearing Chough—in most exquisite glossy plumage and bright red bill and feet—and the Australian Piping Crow. This latter is a beautiful songster, and treated me to a series of very lovely mellow notes. A white Jackdaw was also included in this collection. The Chough uttered a regular Jackdaw-like note, thrice repeated. I spotted three or four Ravens, the Carrion Crow, and the Black-backed Piping Crow. The latter had a stick in its mouth! Spring is here. The small birds hereabouts were the Reed Bunting, Lesser Redpoll, Crossbill—in the green and yellow plumage—Snow Bunting, Chaffinch and Greenfinch, and a couple of Ring Ouzels, and a really splendid specimen of the Nutcracker was not far away.

The Spotted Tinamon is a marvel of colouring, whilst the Crested Colin, Sun Bittern, Cape Turtle Dove, Red-crested Cardinal—singing deliciously something like “birdie, birdie, birdie,” but beautifully musical—Crested Pigeon, Mocking Bird—uttering all sorts of extraordinary notes—White—crested Jay Thrush—a singular bird this, the Jays' head being very marked—Crowned Pigeon, Blue Bird, Blood-breasted Pigeon—one of the most marvellous colourings I have ever seen, there being a patch of blood-red on the breast which looks just like human spilt blood—all possess a charm truly captivating and entertaining.

I passed several minutes with the Pelicans, such as the White-crested, Australian, Rough-billed, and Red-backed species. One cannot help watching them in their curious mannerisms. The extending and closing of the pouch is a study indeed. How they strut, too, exercising their wings as they go; how they dab down their large webbed feet! The latter, I noticed, were red, pink, and grey in those birds which were in the open. The grey-billed Gannet—

that sky-scraping British bird with the Eagle eye—was among the Pelicans, and made one of them move out of the way to allow him to pass. The most extraordinary Pelican on view was the Rough-billed species of North America, it having a singular protuberance on the top of its bill during the breeding season.

In the great Aviary a regular pandemonium raged. The Night Herons were mostly silent, but the Oyster-catchers and the Black-headed Gulls were kicking up a most infernal din. The note uttered by the Oyster-catcher is very shrill. The Common Gulls were squealing, too; goodness knows why; I don't suppose they did themselves, for the want of something better to do perhaps.

The various Ibises were very fine, and I noticed the Glossy, Sacred, White-faced, and Scarlet species, and, near at hand, a very splendid group of Flamingoes were presented. There are about seven species of these birds. The Secretary Vulture, the Mexican Guan, and Great Bustard also caught my eye.



A SLEEPING BEAUTY.

Of course I had to see the Polar Bear. What a tall fellow he is when he stands on his hind legs, and what a lovely set of pearly teeth he possesses.

The Hyænas, Syrian Bear, Malayan Bear, Isabelline Bear—a rare fine animal this—Brown Bear, and others also claimed attention.

The Monkey-house was, of course, duly visited, and what amused me most was a vain Monkey who was admiring himself in a piece of a looking-glass! He fancied himself immensely, I can assure you, and endeavoured to polish the glass on the sandy floor! I never witnessed a more striking illustration of animal sagacity than this. Amongst those seen I may mention the Chaxma Baboon, Guinea and Anubis Baboons, Green Monkey, Pervet, Grinet, Moustached Monkey, and Tcheli Monkey.

I forgot to mention that I paid a visit to the pair of Great Eagle Owls, and what fine birds these are. With their great yellow and black eyes and horned tufts how presentable they appear! They kept in their rustic homestead, but with the aid of glasses I brought them within good range.

In the Antelope house—there are about 120 known species—I noticed the Brindled Gnu, White-tailed Gnu (tail inclining to dirty grey rather than white, the result of confinement, I suppose), Eland, Beisa Antelope, Sing Sing Water Buck, Gazelle (a gentle but stupid creature), Nylghaie (a name for those who are fond of tongue splitters) Harnessed Antelope (a beautiful and delicately marked animal), Reed Buck, Roi Rhebok and Yak.

Coming out of here I heard a female Blackbird utter its “spink, spink, spink,” alarm cry. I disturbed her as she was sitting on the railings of the Three Island Pond. In the Fish house there were exhibited Golden Carp, Pike, Minnows, Tench, Golden Orfe, Bream, Perch, Gudgeon, American Charr, Common and Rainbow Trout, Long-eared Sun Fish, Rock Bass, and some wonderful Sea Anemones. Here, too, was a cage of birds, consisting of specimens of the Redshank, Puffin, Grey Plover, Bar and Black-tailed Godwits, Lapwing, Knot, Shag, and some Penguins.

Up towards the South entrance were located the following beautiful Pheasants:—Swinhoe’s, Golden, Ring-necked, Mangolian, Elliot’s, Peacock, and Silver, and, on the opposite side, some very fine Wapiti Deer.

In the Snake house I had little time to spare, but the Cobras, the Indian Pythons, Tree Snakes, the Pink-skinned Arizona Heloderm, the Crocodiles, Boas, and Temminck’s Snapper (the most gruesome creature I saw in the whole collection), Rattlesnakes, and Vipers, all called for attention and wonderment.

My last visit was to the Tortoise house to see those Giant Tortoises, most of which were presented, I believe, by the Hon. Walter Rothschild. Of these I have only space to say they are wonderful examples of animal life, and provide food for a life study.

Thus ends my unpretentious little sketch. I had not time to visit the Elephants, the Rhinoceros, the Northern Aviary, the Insect house, the Giraffes, the Zebras, the Parrots, and other birds and animals, but I hope to do so later, and of this more anon. The absolute cleanliness of the animals, and their comfortable dwelling places, the civility of the attendants, the well kept gardens, and the

whole systematic working of this wonderful collection, is a credit to those responsible for its control.

30th.—Another white frost last night, but a lovely morning. A very fine bitch Badger was accidentally trapped at Ware Park, Herts, a few days ago. The animal had a magnificent coat, and weighed 18lb.



READY FOR THE PLOUGH.

31st.—The Sparrows are pecking off the leaf buds of my Plum trees, but are not touching the bloom buds as yet! The Furze is in bloom. Mr. T. Bamford, head keeper to Earl Clarendon, that good sportsman and wild-bird protector, writes me to-day from Rickmansworth, Herts, as follows:—"I have shot several Ring Doves lately, and found in each of their crops Ivy berries and Barley. I have also examined the crops of two House Sparrows, one of which contained nothing but Wheat, most likely picked up from my chicken coops, the other a few Oats, a small grain of Maize, and some green grass blades."

I cannot close my notes for March without a short reference to the "mad March Hare." Hares are generally more wild in bad weather, and during the present month they scamper about in such a manner as to be called "mad!" They are interesting wild animals, solitary in their habits, searching for food generally at night, such as Corn, Grass, Vegetables, and the bark of young trees, not returning to their "forms" until after sunrise.

Thus finishes March. My unpretentious notes show that it has been a very seasonable March, nice drying winds and open weather; now with some warm April showers, bright sunshine, and no late frosts, we may look forward in joy and hope for a good harvest.

APRIL.



THE COWMAN: OVER FORTY YEARS ON THE SAME FARM.

APRIL.

„Now Earth, exulting from her Wintry tomb,
Breaks forth with flowers.”

1st.—Lesser Celandine in bloom. Cowslips nicely budded and well above ground. Found a Song Thrush's nest, containing three eggs. The eggs in the nest mentioned in March notes were, to my disgust, all smashed when I visited the nest to-day in the hope of seeing an early brood of four fledglings. Several Long-tailed Tits flying about. I found several Song Thrushes' nests to-day being built and others quite completed.

Trefoil and Vetch nice and green now. A Nuthatch seen with something in its beak. The Blue Tit seems to possess many notes; one of them heard to-day uttered two distinct notes, and then several run into one another.

Great many Ring Doves seen. Many pairs Common Partridges. Vernal Whitlow grass—very small white flower, small Woodruff-like leaves—in flower, also Dog's Mercury and Coltsfoot. The latter is really a very beautiful flower, and should be highly prized. Rabbits chasing each other. Female blossom of Nut Hazel a dull red now, the male changed to dull green and brown; let us hope fertilisation has been perfected. Chaffinch in full song. The ploughed land looks very rich and fertile now. Some sheltered hedgerows almost green.

No Chiff Chaff to be heard, not in the district I rambled to-day, at any rate Yellow Bunting singing. Song and Mistle Thrushes silent. Robin, Wren, and Hedge Sparrow singing. “Cock-up” of the Pheasant heard. Lapwings on the fallows. Many old Turtle Doves' nests found. Pair of Coal Tits seen. The Firs, Pine, and Evergreens very lovely now. Garlic Mustard leaves becoming prominent. Found a dead Mole; this animal is a farmer's friend. Several Song Thrush's feathers found, probably a Sparrow Hawk had

had a meal a day or two previously. By the side of a trickling rivulet in the woods a saucy Robin seen; I believe this bird is nesting now. Skylark singing joyously. Blackbird still silent; that is as regards the song. Forget-me-not leaves conspicuous. Primroses still backward, but a few out. Rookery, but no Rooks about; probably away "gleaning." A chorus of Chaffinches "pinking" in the woods, interspersed with the shrieking alarm cry of the Blackbird. Elder getting greener every day. Honeysuckle foliage well unrolled. Two dead Rooks found; the farmer hereabouts does not value his true friends. I am afraid. Plenty of Oak-Galls. Great Titmouse noisy. Red Dead Nettle in flower. Dandelions, the flower of Spring, out. Tree Creeper seen, and heard uttering a squeaking sort of note, very short.

2nd.—Very hard white frost again last night. Spring exceptionally late. Many black Spiders about in the garden to-day, crawling along the ground.

3rd.—Scotch misty morning. Skylark and Chaffinch singing. Mr. Spary informs me that his son heard the Chiff Chaff on the 1st instant. Raining at night.

4th.—Currant leaves full open in the garden. Rooks dibbing about in front of my window this morning. Skylark singing and soaring at 7 p.m. It is light until that hour now.

5th.—Warm April showers. Hedge Sparrow, Skylark, and Chaffinch heard.

6th.—A lovely Spring day. Everything coming forward apace now. Song Thrush singing. Crocuses in garden have picked up wonderfully this last few days. Violets and Primroses blooming.

I again visited the Zoological Gardens to-day, and will endeavour to write down a few notes as to the Northern part of the collection, which time did not permit my visiting on March 29th.

Passing through Regent's Park, I noticed a sort of very small blue Hyacinth in flower; a male and female House Sparrow collecting twigs; several House Sparrows' nests in the Poplar trees; Daffodils blooming; Crocuses in all their beauty; Song Thrush singing; pair Magpies seen in the trees skirting one of the walks. Is it usual for these birds to be seen in the Park, and do they nest there?



GREENFINCH.

Passing in the Zoo at the South entrance, the White-bellied Sea Eagle was exercising its wings, and even in such a small compass admirably depicted the majestic Eagle flight. Condors wing-stretching, and "preening." The White-tailed Eagle was uttering a weak, plaintive note; Corean Sea Eagle—black, with a yellowish-white and formidable beak—was quacking-like; Vociferous Sea Eagle—whitish grey head, throat and upper breast, chestnut lower breast—presents a very striking appearance as it perches directly in front of the observer, whelping and throwing its head back in the act, similar to a dog. The Beech Martin was out on this occasion; it is a curious little animal. The Ruddy Sheldrake was eating the green grass, and the Indian and Cape Ratels still persist in working for a living. Grunting, trotting, quarrelling, climbing, and feeding, this is how they pass the time. I wonder how many times the larger Ratel goes his rounds in the course of a day!

The Elephants and Camels were out, and carried their freights of happy children. Now for a concise account of that part of the collection hitherto undescribed.

The fine collection of Owls is worth more than a passing notice. There were located, as at this date, the following species:—Burrowing Owl, South America—a dapper little Owl; sought the burrow of a drain-pipe when I was inclined to become inquisitive; Spotted Eagle Owl, South Africa; Virginian Eagle Owl, North America. In this latter species the eye of an Owl provides a wondrous study. The wise look is the result of physiological oddity, as Scientists tell us; but really one cannot help being amazed at the wonderful eyes these birds possess. Those of the last-mentioned Owl struck me very forcibly, with the large black centres and yellow outsides. The Indianee Owl, Ceylon, is a very curious Owl; whilst the Downy Owl, Brazil; Boobook Owl, Australia; Short-eared, and a pair of grand Tawny Owls, both British breeding birds, were all on view. Tengmalm's Owl, Norway, is a greyish bird, and possesses a very sorrowful look. Others in the collection include the Milky Eagle Owl, Mashonaland—sleeping peacefully, and affording ample opportunity for observing the beautiful greyish breast—and the Snowy Owl, Northern Europe—also asleep in the far right-hand corner of its cage, huddled up like a large snowball. Adjoining the Owl collection I noticed the Hobby Falcon—a Summer Migrant to the British Isles; Indian Kite, Eastern Asia; Matterers Hawk, Brazil; Angolan Vulture, West Africa—a grey and blackish bird;

Lanner Falcon, Eastern Europe; Egyptian Kite, South Africa; and a pair of Kestrels.

On the banks sloping down to the canal I noticed some Japanese Deer, Mule Deer (born in the Menagerie), and Mexican Deer, from British Honduras. The Mule Deer is certainly well-named, for it has a regular Mule look about its head.

As soon as I opened the door of the Insect House I heard the most dinning noise. I thought it was someone repairing the hot-water pipes, or a blacksmith hammering on his anvil, but investigation proved that it was the Naked-throated Bell-bird from Brazil, who was



BARBARY SHEEP AT THE ZOO.

exercising his vocal powers. It is an extraordinary note, and must surely alarm inexperienced travellers in Brazil. I believe it has been called the Angelus Bird, because of its resemblance to that of an Angelus bell when heard from a distance. It is a beautiful white bird about the size of a Jay, and green near the bill. Mr. Waterton has said that the bird tolls so sweet a note that "Actæon would stop in mid-chase; Orpheus himself would drop his lute to listen."

Paradise Fish, China, next attracted attention; hard by, an

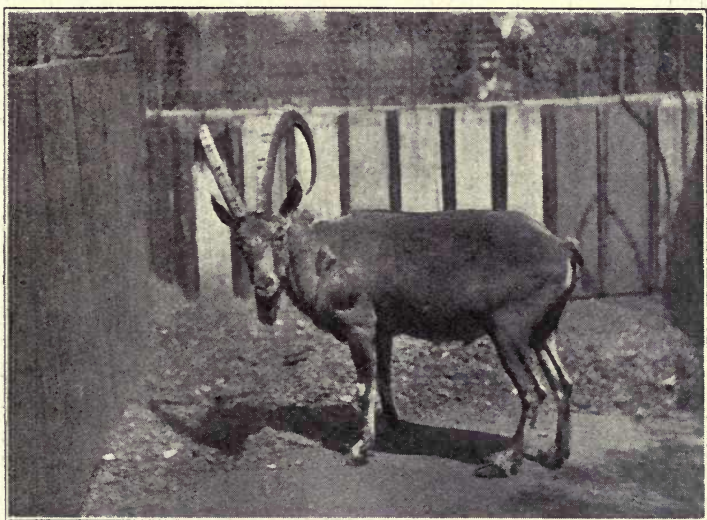
Electric Eel, from Brazil. The White-headed Woodpecker, Brazil white, black, and yellow plumage), and the Radiated Fruit Cuckoo from Sumatra were presented, as also the Larger Hill Mynah, from Northern India. This bird is something like a large Blackbird. He was busy chattering to himself. The South of France was represented by the European Stick Insect. The Trap-door Spider did not escape my attention, neither did the Black-billed Hornbill (Abyssinia), Silk-producing Moths, and some European Butterflies, Carunculated Bell Bird, Guiana (all white, with a curious tassel, like a whitish catkin, on the top of its beak), Cape Scorpion, and Bird-catching Spider (Trinidad).

The Kangaroo collection includes the Red, and Great species, Great Wallaroo, South Australia; Bennett's Wallaby, Black-tailed Wallaby, New South Wales; Agile Wallaby (I think most of the Kangaroos are agile enough), Rat Kangaroo (very Rat-like, to be sure), Brush-tailed, Black-striped, and Thigh-striped species.

In the Sloths House the following were out:—Little Armadillo, Patagonia; Hairy Armadillo, La Plata; Great Ant-eater, South America. A male Ant-eater was added in January of this year (the first time a male has been exhibited in the Menagerie), and it is hoped the pair will breed; the long snout, and bushy tail, are very prominent in these curious creatures, as also the tongue. The Sooty Phalanger, Tasmania—(in this cage I noticed a cheeky uninvited Mouse feeding on a carrot) — and Indian Chevrolain brings me to Micky, the Chimpanzee. Micky is about three years old, and keeps company with a black kitten. The keeper was giving Micky a holiday, and he seemed to enjoy the caresses of such a kind friend. The keeper told Micky he didn't love him at all, whereupon the intelligent creature pouted and frowned, and almost cried. "If you love me," said the keeper to Micky, "prove to me that you do," at which the Chimpanzee thrust his hairy arms round the keeper's neck and fondled him! Can we wonder at the keepers becoming attached to their precious charges? The Aard Wolf, South Africa; Moor Macaque, East Indies; Squirrel-like Phalanger—a soft grey fur, white underneath; Ring-tailed Coati, Honduras; and Vulpine Phalanger, Australia, also attracted attention. On the spouting of the Small Cats' House a male House Sparrow was sitting and *singing*. I have heard Sparrows chirp, but never before have I had the pleasure of calling *Passer domesticus* a song bird. It consisted of two notes, something like "Phew—phew-o-o," musical, and very pleasant. I was simply astonished on looking up to see the black throat of a

House Sparrow. There was absolutely no doubt about it. Here is food for further investigation. I have little space to deal with the inmates of the Small Cats' House, so must hastily mention those I noted. They were: Egyptian Weasel; Grey, Dusty, Slender, Spotted Ichneumons; Egyptian Cat; Leopard, East Africa (a fine young animal); Caracal, India (long ears, hare-like in form); Geoffrey's Cat, Paraguay; Servaline Cat, Uganda; Serval, South Africa (very savage); Pale Genet; Jungle Cat, India; Ocelot, Para; Golden Cat, Sumatra; Fossa, Madagascar; White-tailed Ichneumon, Atbara River enjoyed a piece of chocolate from a visitor); and Weasel, British Islands.

The Markhoors House I passed on my way to the Parrot House.



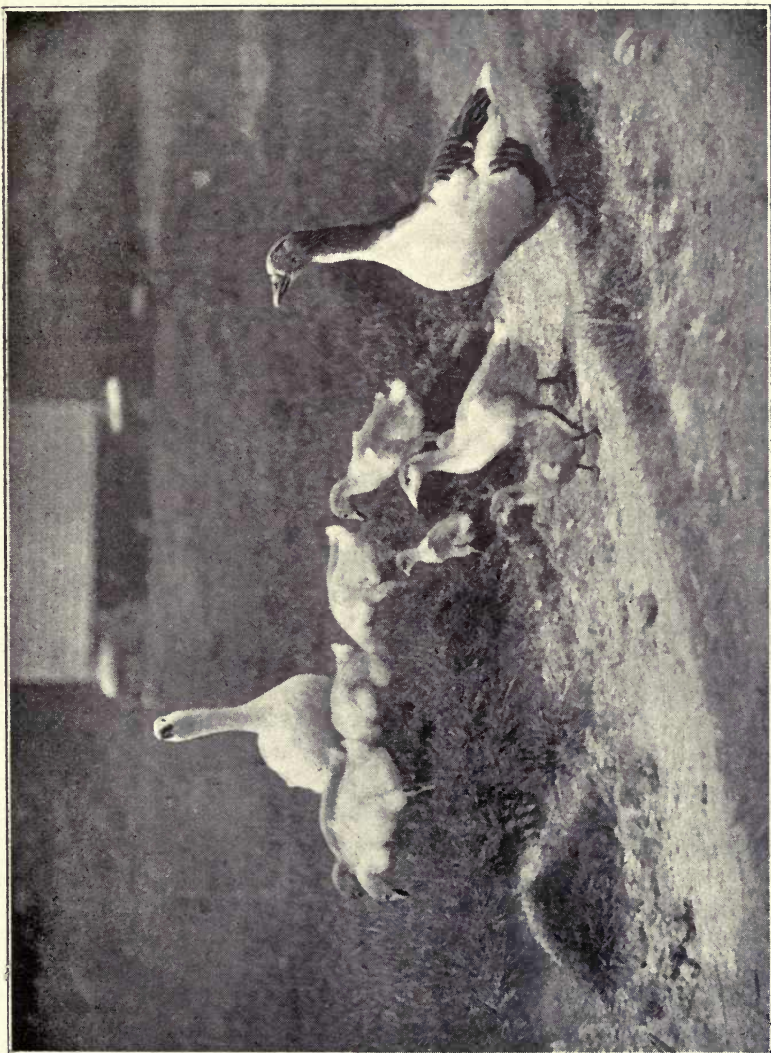
IBEX AT THE ZOO.

The din in the latter was deafening, and the collection of Parrots so extensive that it would take up the best part of a day to gain sufficient information to write a full account. Nearly one hundred species are exhibited, and I must merely content myself by mentioning the Banded Parrakeet, India; Yellow-rumped, New South Wales; Rose Hill, Australia Browns, Paradise, and many other species too numerous to mention giant Macaws, Weaver Birds, Finches, Aracaris, Tanagers, Honey eaters, Cockatoos, Lorikeets, Toucans, &c. The Short-billed Toucan—a marvellous plumed bird, with a delicate yellow neck, merging into cardinal, and black plumage generally—Central America; the Toco

Toucan, Guiana—possesses a wonderful bill; White-crested and Yellow-billed Touraons; Hunting Crow from India—a mingling of delicate green, blue, red, and black, dark eye stripe very prominent, yellow-red bill and feet, and possessing a very curious flight, a sort of hop, skip and a jump; Brazilian Hang-nest—a very lovely bird; and the Cardinal Eclectus, Amboyna, is all I can mention, and feel that I have done but poor justice to a unique collection deserving far greater attention.

I must only mention casually in passing the Indian Rhinoceros, Hairy-eared Rhinoceros, African and Indian Elephants, Springbok, Loder's Gazelle, Red-fronted Gazelle, Senegal; Arabian Gazelle, Harnessed Antelope, Pleasant Antelope (looked the reserve of pleasant), Selous' Antelope (a fine animal), Hippopotamus (born in the Menagerie in 1872), two fine Giraffes (all neck and legs); Brazilian Tapir, Somali Wild Ass (no shoulder stripes, only leg marks). Burchell's, Common, and Grevy's Zebras. The Zebra collection is a wonderful one, and the last-named is from Southern Abyssinia, and is the largest of any exhibited. It has never been on view in England previously. The Kiang, from Tibet; Asiatic Wild Ass, South-west Asia; the Beaver Pond, the Deer Sheds, some Barbary Doves, and Brush Turkeys, and, farther on, the Wombats, completed my tour. I had not time to visit the Small Mammals House, nor the Moose yard, but what I have written covers most of the collection, and I hope may prove useful and interesting to those of my readers who have not had the good fortune to visit this wonderful collection, which is, in spite of statements to the contrary, a credit to those responsible for its control.

7th.—Lilac and Hawthorn well out. Rather cold to-day, but good deal of sunshine; a little rain. The Rooks are very busy now, and they seem to be increasing in numbers by leaps and bounds: in fact a great many birds, such as Thrushes and Blackbirds, Hedge Sparrows, Robins, Starlings, Jackdaws, Chaffinches, three or four of the Titmice, Common Wren, and Ring Doves, seem to be more plentiful this last two or three years. Owls, too, are not so uncommon as is generally supposed. The Lambs are getting strong now. I noticed several Fir plantations to-day; I think these improve the landscape, and many birds love to nest, and roost in them. Nice lot of Red Daisies out in the garden. In garden to-day I found a Millepede (*Julus terrestris*), better known perhaps as the False Wireworm. It feeds on the rootage of various plants. Also found chrysalis of the Heart and Dart Moth, and larva of the Dart Moth. A golden sunset at 6.30 p.m.



GESE AND GOSLINGS.

8th.—Wild Strawberry in flower. Watched a pair of Tree Creepers this morning with much interest; they are very silent whenever I see them. The chorus of Thrushes very beautiful; the woods echoed with sweet music. Never was there such rivalry in the bird world as just now.

Coal and Great Tits, Skylark, Robin, Wren, and Chaffinch singing. Hawthorn out in some sheltered spots. Lesser Celandine buds nearly all bursting.

I found the following nests to-day:—

Blackbird: 1, in Fir, lined with leaves; 2, in Fir, the pliant branches beautifully hanging over the nest, the latter placed on top of a branch; 3, in Rhododendron; 4, in a low Hornbeam, composed of Grass and Moss; 5, in Honeysuckle bower, composed of nearly all Moss. No eggs in any of these five nests.

Song Thrush: 1, in Fir, placed on one of the overhanging outside branches, 3 eggs, bird on; 2, in Ivy, side of tree, broken eggs found on ground; 3, in Fir, 4 eggs, bird on; 4, side Oak tree, Oak leaves used, sticks, skeleton, grasses; no eggs.

All these nests were very large indeed, bulking out near the middle, and gradually opening out towards the bottom in the form of a platform for the cup to rest in; much larger than those found later on.

Rooks cawing, Jays screaming, Woodpeckers laughing, Pheasants shouting.

The Sallow out beautifully, and well to-date, for to-day is Palm Sunday; the golden blossoms in their prime, and the aroma very beautiful. The Bees busy round the trees in the woods. The long, pliant branches, as they swayed to and fro in the breeze, presented a very pleasant sight. It will be a Primrose Eastertide; there were a good many out to-day, but in a few days it will be a mass of green and yellow. A couple of Humble-bees in the woods. I noticed some Fungi on a dead tree stump, and hard by a lately-deceased Hedgehog. We note the Hog-like face, the pricked-up ears, and formidable claws; it could not have been dead very long.

Clumps of Moss in the woods, very nice and green. Saw a Coal-tit or two. How attractive the black head and the soft grey plumage; it utters a weak note; at least, those seen to-day did.

Cold winds and little sunshine to-day. Saw several Hares careering about, also Rabbits and many pairs of Partridges. The

latter are in full voice now; how they crouch, until one can almost step on them. How rural to see the young Lambs suckling! Saw a few pairs of Jackdaws round some old trees. Nice lot of White Violets blooming. Came across many newly-made Mole heaps and runs. Found a dead Redbreast, and the wing of a Thrush. Yellow Bunting "chitting." The withered foliage of the Hornbeam is very prominent now; it is one of those trees which retains its Summer dress the Winter through. In the woods it is one mass of brown. We examine a few, and see that for every dead leaf a new one is rapidly developing. A similar remark applies to some of the Birch trees. I saw at a friend's house to-day a male Goldfinch over ten years old at least. He was in lovely fettle, the scarlet and golden, the white and liver on the breast very pronounced. I also saw the result of planting a Date stone; it had been in a pot about twelve months, was about a foot high, and similar to a large blade of grass. I am told that the stone is forced to the surface when the seed commences to germinate. Still no Migrants to be seen or heard, although I listened and looked at every turn.

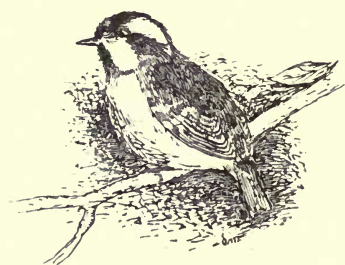
9th.—Misty early, giving place later to brilliant sunshine. Wren, Skylark, and Hedge Sparrow singing. Many of my Currant bushes quite green now. Plum blossom opening. A correspondent writes me that he found yesterday in the Southend district a Blackbird's nest, containing three eggs; several Song Thrushes sitting, with four eggs each; two Hedge Sparrows, ready for eggs. It seems to me that the early Song Thrushes' nests do not contain more than four eggs.

10th.—A correspondent records in the April issue of "Nature Notes" the occurrence of a Hoopoe on March 5th, and one or two following days, in South Devon. This beautiful bird is a regular Spring Migrant to our Country. I wish that it escaped the gunner, and was allowed to breed amongst us, but it is such an attractive-looking bird. Foliage of Michaelmas Daisies nicely out in the garden to-day. A day of brilliant sunshine, with nice gentle breezes. Skylark singing; Chaffinch "pinking" in the garden; House Sparrows building. Gnats seen in the garden at 7.15 p.m.

11th.—April showers. Hedge Sparrow singing. Saw Ptarmigan, Partridge, and Red Grouse in London poulterer's to-day. Where do these birds come from? If from our own Country, is it not the close season? Rained heavily towards evening, but Skylark soaring, and singing, at 6.30 p.m.

12th.—The Coltsfoot is a mass of golden on the railway banks now. The Almond blossom is in its beauty. Skylark and Chaffinch singing. The Blackbird is still silent! Nutmeg foliage out in the garden. Splendid show of Primroses and Violets; the latter are very late this year. A dull day, windy. Rooks and Lapwings on the ploughed land. Many Spiders in the garden. The scarlet buds of the Wall-creeper just discernible. Chaffinch and Sparrows almost the only birds seen in the garden now. The Robin his quite forsaken me. Hawthorn green in places. Travelling in the train and elsewhere, has the reader ever noticed the various shapes of the fields? It is quite a study.

13th.—It has blown a Westerly gale for 24 hours. Slight showers occasionally, but good deal of brilliant sunshine. Skylarks all paired off now. It is Good Friday to-day, and, of course, I have had my turn of gardening. Every working man looks forward to Eastertide



COAL TITMOUSE.

for getting his little plot in apple-pie order. The soil turned up beautifully. Found a pupa of the Heart and Dart Moth in the ground. The Sparrows have taken a few of my Plum blossom buds. The Iris leaves are like green swords. White Lilies very hardy; not touched by the severe Winter; the green foliage very nice now. Rhubarb through. Currant flowers just discernible. Found two Black-

bird's nests, each containing two eggs. Both built in faggots in the woods, and both placed on the East side. Following birds seen or heard:—Chaffinch, House Sparrow, Rook, Song Thrush, Blackbird, Pheasant (two females, one of them being very greyish), Coal Tit, Jay, Ring Dove, Redbreast, Common Wren, and Skylark. Beautiful male Chaffinch in the garden. Good few Rabbits scampering about in the woods.

Flowers found blooming to-day:—Dandelion, Groundsel, Red Dead Nettle, Coltsfoot, Dog's Mercury, Primrose, Anemone (a few only out in sheltered spots in the woods), Germander Speedwell, Sallow, Lesser Celandine, Daisy, and Daffodil.

The Rooks flying very low because of the wind; they swept across the land with great rapidity to reach a certain spot. They

overshot the mark some few feet, and then turned the head round facing the direction from which they had travelled.

Nut Hazel leaves bursting. Wild Hyacinths in the woods coming forward apace. Although I have been out a good deal, I have not heard or seen a single Summer Migrant; but in to-day's high wind, it was not possible to hear hardly any bird.

14th.—My notes from to-day until the 17th (inclusive) refer to the district of Rickmansworth, Herts.

South winds. Chaffinch, Skylark, Song Thrush, and Common Wren singing. Very warm. Saw a black Lamb as I passed through Cassiobury Park. A barge was in the lock, and curiously enough the name of it was the "Plover."

The dull, velvety red blossom of Larch Fir out. Saw the first two Butterflies of the season; not close enough to identify; probably Brimstones. Coal Tit and Yellow Bunting singing. Rooks prey on the keeper's Hen's eggs. Sowing Mustard is a good way of ridding the land of the Wireworm.

A boy in the district has killed 14,000 House Sparrows in nine months!

A keeper tells me he has seen as many as 20 pairs of Ravens on a Vermin pole on Lord Falmouth's estate in Cornwall at one time!! And this only a few years ago!

Saw black Rabbit and a pair of Herons. The latter look like breeding in the Park.

Rooks leave a neighbourhood sometimes for apparently no reason, but it is probably because the nest trees are decaying. I give the suggestion for what it may be worth. Some brute set fire to a nest of young Owls here last Summer. They were those of the Tawny Owl, the nest being placed in a hollow tree. Jackdaws very plentiful, nesting in holes of trees in the Park. Saw pair of Kingfishers up Trout stream, also Moorhens. On the Vermin pole I noticed Stoats, Rats, Jays, Sparrow Hawks, Magpies, Cats, and Hedgehogs. The Frog's love-song heard in the Park at night, as also the hoot of several Owls.

15th.—Robin, Hedge Sparrow, and Chaffinch singing at 5 a.m. I am told by a keeper that he has never found a Sparrow Hawk's egg before May 8th, but always on that date. Can any of my readers

give me any information hereon? Great Spotted Woodpecker in case in keeper's cottage, shot in the neighbourhood. Coal Tits everywhere, singing "Oh-yes, oh-yes," &c., only two notes, somewhat shrill for so small a bird. The reddish-blue tinge on young Birch plantation very striking as seen from a distance. Rabbit crouched under bracken, and allowed stones to be thrown right on to it several times before it moved. Heartsease in flower. The female Chaffinch "pinks," as well as the male. Some Pheasant's eggs in the woods. Golden-crested Wrens and Lapwings seen. Rooks on newly-sown Barley field, and the Crow-scarer hard at work frightening them off. Plover's eggs plentiful as at this date at Longton. Staffordshire.



GREAT SPOTTED WOODPECKER.

16th.—Song Thrush singing at 5 a.m. Great Tit common, and uttering its bell-like note. Cold winds this Easter; April showers, and fitful gleams of bright sunshine. Not a single Migrant to be seen or heard in this district, but Mr. C. E. Darling informs me he saw three swallows to-day on Sir Charles Foster's estate in Staffordshire. It is one of the latest seasons I can remember. Hedge Sparrow, Wren, and Robin singing. Ring Doves very plentiful, and flapping noisily out of Fir trees at night. Several Rookeries on the estate. How the Rooks just keep out of gunshot! Jackdaws associate with them quite freely. A Blackbird singing slightly towards evening, many uttering their alarm cries.

Rabbits' nest in ploughed field. Nuthatch "calling," Long-tailed Tits "searching." Chaffinches very plentiful. Watched a Squirrel; its dray composed of dead fern, sticks, and moss; built in Fir. Many Ivy-covered trees, affording excellent nesting sites.

Keeper kills about 60 Stoats per annum. A few Badgers in the district.

Fowls and young Retriever pups associating together! Bats seen out some days ago by the keeper. Stock Doves breed in the park every year, nesting in holes of trees.

17th.—Examined Sparrow's crop; it contained nothing but Barley. It is quite time an insectivorous diet was commenced. Pied Wagtails on newly-sown Barley field. Greenfinch singing. Dull, warm, rainy day. Hen Chaffinch "weeping," and Song Thrushes singing beautifully. Jay's nest in Fir, composed of Fir twigs and Moss; no eggs. Two Stoats hung up in the woods; how delicate the yellowish belly! Green Woodpecker laughing loudly, forecasting rainy weather.

Song Thrush singing at 7.30 p.m. Mistle Thrush has ceased singing.

18th—Lovely day. Plum blossom almost bursted. Cherry blossom well out. Flower of Gooseberry well open. Violets going off. Cowslips in flower.

Mr. Bertram Bryan, Longton, Staffs., kindly sends me the following interesting notes on the four species of Newts mentioned in my Diary under date of February 4th.

"These interesting creatures are despised by the majority of people simply because of the rooted superstition that prevails in the public mind. It is still believed—in spite of so much having already been said by various writers—that Newts, or, as they are called in Staffordshire, "Askers," are capable of inflicting a severe sting, and even of spitting fire, both ideas being utterly absurd.

"My own observations on the Newt are by no means exhaustive, yet I have ventured to think they may not be entirely devoid of interest to at least a few of your numerous readers. Of the four species which inhabit our ponds, I have, up to the present, only made the acquaintance of two, viz., the Great Crested and the Common Smooth Newt, both of which are very common in our neighbourhood. I will attempt to give a slight description, by means of which they may be identified. The Great Crested Newt, when mature, is about five or six inches in length. Its skin is covered with protuberances, which give it a warty appearance. The colour below is a bright golden orange, with large black spots; above, it is of an olive brown, with a few black spots. The male at this season of the year (which is the breeding season) is very conspicuous, for in addition to his bright colours he is decorated with a beautiful crest, which commences on the head, and continues down the back and tail, the former portion being notched, the latter broad and even. There is also a silvery streak running horizontally along the centre of the tail. The female

is about the same length, but, being devoid of the crest, is thereby easily distinguished from her mate. The Common Smooth Newt attains a length of from $3\frac{1}{2}$ to 4 inches. It may readily be distinguished from its larger relative, the Crested Newt, not only by its smaller size, but, as its name implies, by the smooth nature of its skin. It is of a yellow colour underneath, and olive brown above, spotted all over with black. This male also possesses a crest, which is fine and even. The female lacks the crest as before, and is of a more sober colouring. The Palmated Newt I have not yet taken, but no doubt it will turn up somewhere if sought after diligently. Its length is from 3 to $3\frac{1}{2}$ inches, being similar to the Smooth Newt, but the male having the claws webbed, those of the hind feet especially so. The crest is less prominent, and there is a double ridge along the back. The end of its tail is blunt, with a spine projecting from it. The Straight lipped Water Newt I am unacquainted with, therefore I cannot describe it. Those readers who care for keeping an aquarium should (if not having previously done so) make their way to some roadside or marl-pit pond, which they will almost be sure to find tenanted by Newts. With a little careful hunting you may capture a few specimens with your hands. Do not be afraid of them. It is true they will wriggle about a little when seized, and may probably give vent to their squeaking cry. Don't throw them down again, however, but gently transfer to your collecting can. When placed in your aquarium at home, and viewed as they swim along horizontally, they are seen to the best advantage. Their colours stand out effectively, and the beautiful crest, which falls along the back when taken out of the water, is now to be seen carried erect, and you will begin to realise what interesting creatures Newts are. As to food, they will readily take small Worms, &c. Observe and note their mode of feeding, breathing, swimming, courtship, egg-laying, &c. To describe all here would require too much space, and besides, by observing for yourself, you will find that these things will fix themselves more firmly in your mind than by reading of them. A piece of wood or cork should be floated on the water in which they are kept, or, what is much better, a rockwork built so as to allow the Newts to leave the water whenever they may wish, for it must be remembered that they are amphibious. Also obtain a suitable water plant and insert, as the leaves are used by the female Newt to fold round each of her eggs, which are deposited singly, and not in batches, as by Frogs. The eggs hatch out in about a fortnight or three weeks. The young, when they emerge, are small, transparent creatures, breathing by means of gills, which are placed on each side of the head, and look

like small tufts. They much resemble the Tadpole of the Frog, but as they increase in size are easily distinguished from them by the appearance of the front pair of legs, whereas in Frog Tadpole the hind pair put in an appearance first. As time goes on the ill's disappear, and the Newt breathes by means of lungs. It is said that if the Tadpoles are kept in a vessel containing water from which they cannot escape they retain their gills, the lungs never being developed. Occasionally the Newt casts off its old skin (a new one having been previously formed underneath ready to take its place), sometimes in pieces, at others whole. A female which I kept last year cast her skin in one piece, and by floating it out in water, and inserting a piece of stout paper underneath, I succeeded in obtaining a good specimen. It exactly resembles its former owner, but looks more like a pencil drawing than a skin."

19th.—Another lovely day, warm. and at times the heat quite oppressive. Skylark singing, also Song Thrush. Hedgerows mostly green now. Light until 7.45 p.m. No wind. I saw a Bat in the garden at eight o'clock. First one I have seen out this season. Primrose Day and they are in their beauty now. Plum blossom out, also Red Currant; the Black Currant blossom is later in showing itself.

How grand to be out and about early on an April morn, when all the rest of the world is asleep!

"But who the melodies of morn can tell?
The wild brook babbling down the mountain side;
The lowing herd; the sheepfold's simple bell;
The pipe of early shepherd dim descried
In the lone valley; echoing far and wide
The clamorous horn along the cliffs above;
The hollow murmur of the ocean tide;
The hum of Bees; the Linnet's lay of love;
And the full choir that wakes the universal grove!"

And then again—

"Oh, how can I renounce the boundless store
Of charms which Nature to her votary yields?
The warbling woodland, the resounding shore,
The pomp of groves, the garniture of fields,
All that the genial ray of morning gilds?"

20th.—Another Summer-like day. Several Hairy Caterpillars in the garden. The Cuckoo is one of the few birds which eats these Caterpillars, so that as his food is about, he himself should soon be here. Doubtless he is by this time, but the cold winds at Easter kept his voice mute.

Hedge Sparrow singing.



PRIMROSES IN FLOWER.

Mr. Tom Sansom, watercress-grower, informs me he saw some Swallows in the neighbourhood on the 11th inst.

Peas and Radishes through in the garden.

A beautiful starlight night. No wind. Many birds calling overhead at 11 p.m. Very high up, and apparently Migrants coming from a Southern direction. Their callings in the stillness of the night very weird and attractive.

Mr. E. D. Henderson, Thornfield, Erdington, Birmingham, writes me as follows:—"You may be interested to hear that on April 14th I saw and heard a Nightjar near Birmingham. Gilbert White gives May 1st for its first appearance, Markwick May 26th, and Bewick end of May."

21st. — Charming Summer day. Brilliant sunshine. I have never known a season to advance so rapidly as this Spring; since the 17th it has been glorious growing weather, and quite a transformation scene has taken place by the country side.

Dandelion, Coltsfoot, and Cowslip one mass of golden on the railway banks.

The Starlings have been singing for all they were worth this last few days.

My brother heard the Cuckoo in the Verulam Woods on the 16th inst.

Mr. Henry Lewis saw and heard the Tree Pipit on the 18th inst.; a Grass Snake was found in the Hatfield Road on the 19th inst.; and the Wryneck was seen on the 13th inst.

Small White Butterfly flying about in the garden; also saw to-day a good many Small Tortoiseshells, and a few Brimstone Butterflies.



REED BUNTING.

I found the following wild flowers in bloom to-day:—Common Chickweed, Marsh Marigold, Red Dead Nettle, Lesser Celandine, Dandelion, Dog's Mercury, Daisy. Strawberry-leaved Potentil, Greater Stitchwort, Dog Violet, Anemone, Cowslip, Holly, Cuckoo Flower, Blackthorn, and White Violet.

I saw and heard many Tree Pipits to-day. They were in good song, some singing in their descent, others whilst perching on the telegraph wires, or the branch of a tree. I think there is no more pleasant sight than to observe and listen to this beautiful songster for the first time.

Flower of Horse Chestnut bursting, and the foliage very delicate as it unrolls.



DOG VIOLETS.

Tadpoles in the pools.
Humble and other Bees all out.

I found to-day the following nests and eggs:—Two Hedge Sparrows', one containing three eggs; two Redbreasts', one containing five eggs, hen bird "on," and built in exactly the same hole in the bank as last year; eleven Blackbirds', only one containing eggs to the number of four; six Song Thrushes', one nest containing two eggs, and another one egg.

Saw and heard the Greater Whitethroat, and saw the Lesser

Whitethroat, which was silent. The latter species is not such a good songster as the former.

Flower of Cuckoo Pint coming forward.

Heard the Cuckoo.

Coal Tit, Common Wren, Song Thrush, Blackbird, Chaffinch, Lapwing, Skylark, and Robin singing; Skylark, Robin, and Song Thrush all singing after 7.30 p.m.

Many Bats out at dusk.

A friend heard the Nightingale for the first time this evening.

22nd.—Flowers found to-day:—Germander Speedwell, Groundsel, Ground Ivy, Greater Stitchwort, Heartsease, Scentless Mayweed, White and Red Dead Nettle, Vernal Whitlow Grass, Lesser Celandine, Daisy, Dog Violet, Strawberry-leaved Potentil, Dandelion, Dog, Mercury, Chickweed, Forget-me-not, Blackthorn, Cherry, Furze, Holly, Sallow, Garlic Mustard, Wild Hyacinth (the first ones I have seen in bloom this year), Anemone, Hedge Parsley, Periwinkle, and Primrose. When one considers that a few days ago only half-a-dozen wild flowers were blooming, the above list shows what favourable weather the last few days has been. We are now getting quite a formidable list of flowers.

I heard or saw the following birds during a ramble to-day:—Chiff Chaff, Willow Warbler, many Tree Pipits, Greater White-throat, Chaffinch, Skylark, Blackbird, Coal Tit, Great Tit, Rook, Starling, Hedge Sparrow, House Sparrow, Greenfinch, Yellow Bunting, Common Wren, Song Thrush, Redbreast, and three Wheatears. The latter do not look like staying, but are bound elsewhere. The Chiff Chaff, Willow Warbler, and Wheatear I heard or saw for the first time this Spring, but all of them have doubtless been here some time. The Wheatear is one of the earliest Summer visitors, and the Chiff Chaff is never very far behind it. I was struck with the numerous Willow Warblers and Tree Pipits. Their voices were to be heard on every side, and both birds seem to me to be increasing, the Pipit especially.

More Hairy Caterpillars in the garden.

Found a Song Thrush's egg sucked, probably a Jay was the marauder, as there are many of these birds in the district in which the egg was found. Several Small White, Brimstone, and Small Tortoiseshell Butterflies out; and this reminds me that the following Butterflies may be looked for during April:—Large Garden White, Small Garden White, Green-veined White, Orange Tip, Wood White, Brimstone, Pearl-bordered Fritillary, Comma, Large Tortoiseshell, Small Tortoiseshell, Peacock, Camberwell Beauty, Red Admiral, Painted Lady, Speckled Wood Butterfly, Green Hairstreak, Common Copper, Azure Blue, Grizzled Skipper, and Dingy Skipper.

I wish to reiterate here that the observer must not be disappointed if he does not see all these, as, of course, much depends on the season, but, given favourable weather, and a likely district, several of the Butterflies above enumerated should be on the wing.

Many Hares seen. A friend counted 11 in one field, and informs me he saw a young Leveret about half-grown a few days since.



NEST AND EGGS OF CARRION CROW.

Partridges all paired now. Many Field Mice creeping about in the hedgerows.

I heard two or three Nightingales during to-day for the first time. What a mistaken idea it is that this bird does not sing during the day! He does sing in the daytime, but his voice, mingled with that of his fellows, is less captivating than when listened to during the shadowy stillness of the moonlight hour. He is in by no means good song yet, but so soon as the females arrive—the males preceding the latter by some few days—his melodies will be poured forth in all their beauty.

Has the reader ever heard the Jay croaking? It is impossible to give a written description of the note, but it is certainly distinctly different to the far-better known shriek of this bird.

Saw a Mistle Thrush or two. Many Bats round a small pool towards evening.

23rd.—The various greens are well worth noticing at this season. The light and dark greens, as compared with the brown withered leaves of the Beech and Hornbeam, present a very striking appearance. Another lovely day. Masses of Cherry and Plum blossom; it is many years since I saw such an abundance of blossom. It looks like being a good fruit season.

Skylark singing.

A correspondent wrote me recently as to the names of some water-plants, and I may set out the names of a few which may be looked for, all of which do well in an aquarium, and their growth will afford the observer much interest:—Frog Bit, Water Soldier, Canadian Water Weed, Mare's Tail, Spiked Water Milfoil, Vernal Water Starwort, Autumnal Water Starwort, Water Crowfoot, Ivy-leaved Crowfoot, Water Lobelia, Lily-like Villarsia, Buck-bean, Forget-me-not, Brooklime, Water Mint, Common Hornwort, Bladderwort, Water Violet, Flowering Rush, Great Water Plantain, Common Arrow-head, Branched Bur Reed, Sweet Flag, Broad-leaved Pond Weed, Cape Fragrant Water Lily, Water Chestnut, Water Awlwort, Greater, Thick, Lesser, and Ivy-leaved Duckweeds; Willow Moss, and the various Crystalworts.

24th.—Beautiful weather still, but surely much too warm to last. Hawthorn getting greener daily. Some nice showers now would push things along rapidly.

No wind. This note may appear somewhat trifling, but it is important now that the Migrants are arriving daily. I cannot impress

upon my readers the value of a "jotter" or small note-book. This diary is, in the first place, written in a very crude style; but I invariably write down at once anything which comes under my notice, so as there can be no mistake about it, and to those who wish to succeed in the study of Natural History this is absolutely necessary. One's memory may be remarkably good, even phenomenal; but a note written down at once, under the date it came to the notice of the observer, is worth all the memories in the world.

Pinks "heading up" in the garden.

Skylark singing at 7.30 p.m.

Mr. T. Bamford, Chandlers' Cross, Herts., writes me to-day as follows:—"On the 18th inst. I heard the Cuckoo, and saw a Swallow, and on the 19th heard the Nightingale. I shot two Rooks on the 18th, and found in their crops Barley, Earthworms, and a few Wireworms."

25th.—Colder; the heat wave has apparently passed. Raining. Skylark singing. No wind.

I saw a Toad to-day, which reminds me that there are two species in Britain, the Common and the Natter-jack. The latter is somewhat rare, and can be identified by the pale line which runs down the back. It is, unlike the Common Toad, found in dry localities, and only resorts to water for breeding purposes. Ten degrees of frost to-night.

26th.—Not so cold as yesterday. Brilliant sunshine. Skylark singing. House Sparrows busy nesting, the nest being placed at the extremity of an Oak branch, and attached to the branch in a very clever manner.

No wind.

27th.—Cold East winds. Very little sunshine. Young Lambs getting quite strong, Hedge Sparrow singing. Cowslips flowering in profusion, Blackthorn and Wild Cherry blossom a picture.

I have heard no birds singing to-day.

28th.—Still very cold, but nice sunshine. How entertaining the Willow Warbler, or Willow Wren, is, especially when looked at through a good pair of field glasses! I need hardly impress upon my readers the absolute necessity of a pair of good glasses. Without them much escapes the notice of the observer, and sure identification is very often impossible. I watched a Willow Wren to-day. How



NEST AND EGGS OF CHAFFINCH.

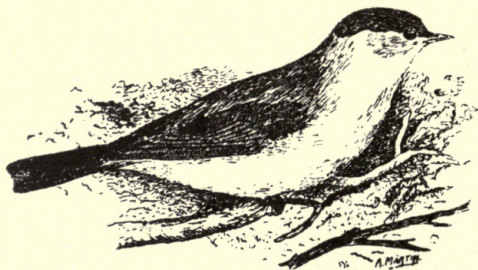
delicate the bright olive-green upper plumage, and the yellowish-white under parts, and what a pleasing little warble it utters.

The Green Woodpecker is especially noisy just now, more so than I have noticed for some time past. Chiff Chaff, Cuckoo, Hedge Sparrow, Song Thrush, Redbreast, Starling, Skylark, Coal Tit, and Chaffinch singing.

We want some nice April showers now.

Writing to me under date of April 26th, Mr. Nicholson, of Portobello, N.B., says:—"Spring is late this season, and the only arrivals of Summer Migrants so far are the Chiff Chaff, Wheatear, Swallow, Ring Ouzel, and Willow Wren."

29th.—Westerly breezes, not much sunshine. The following wild flowers found blooming to-day:—Red and White Dead Nettles, Groundsel, Dandelion, Garlic Mustard, Daisy, Blackthorn, Greater Stitchwort, Hedge Parsley, Dog Violet, Dog's Mercury, Strawberry-leaved Potentil, Lesser Celandine, Primrose, Cherry, Sallow, Ground Ivy, Wild Hyacinth (many budded, but not a great many in flower as yet), Furze, Elder (just bursting), Germander Speedwell, Coltsfoot, and Shepherd's Purse, The flower of the Maple is out beautifully now, the *Acer Platanoides*. This tree, unlike the commoner *Acer Campestre*, has leaves with sharp-pointed lobes.



BLACKCAP.

I saw a couple of Swallows to-day for the first time; also the Blackcap. What a delicious songster this latter bird is, for he belongs, of course, to the Warbler family. I heard him first; he was

uttering the song of the Redbreast, but suddenly broke out into a more varied, rich, and mellow outburst, which at once convinced me it was the Blackcap. The bird kept well concealed, and it was half-an-hour before I could get a glimpse of him; but I had a grand sight of him when luck and patience did favour me. How pleasing to see again the black head, and light and dark ash plumage; to observe the sprightly actions, and the bird's deft movements from twig to twig. This bird undoubtedly possesses the imitative faculty to great perfection, and ranks as one of the most pleasing song birds in the British Isles.

Willow Warbler, Chaffinch, Hedge Sparrow, Common Wren, Song Thrush, Blackbird, Chiff Chaff, Cuckoo, Great Tit (the more I hear this bird the more variety of notes he seems to utter), and Ring dove, all singing. It is more correct I suppose to say the latter bird was cooing.

Standing underneath, or hard by, a Rookery, how it upsets the feathered occupants. They caw, and scream, and take good care to keep just out of gunshot. One particular Rook to-day was whelping like a dog, reminding me of the Vociferous Sea Eagle, about which I wrote in my notes as to the Zoological Gardens. What a mess these birds make underneath their nest trees! Dead Rook lying on the ground. Found many Song Thrushes' nests to-day, one or two with eggs, one containing four young ones just showing their feathers. Several of the nests looked as if the young had flown! Found a Blackbird's nest containing one solitary sprawling fledgling. Chaffinch's nest placed on pliant branches of a Fir, beautifully "hung"; containing four eggs. The male bird in a terrible state of excitement whilst I was at the nest. When nesting in Fir trees, I find the Song Thrush uses a good many Fir twigs in the outside construction.



NARCISSI.

Several Small White Butterflies out and about.

Wych Elm out. Foliage of the Limes very beautiful now. Beech buds bursting; Larch Fir flowering; many Humble Bees out: saw some Jays, and a Tree Creeper landed on a tree within a foot or two

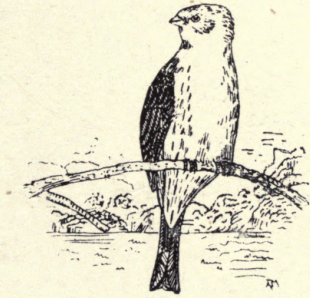


YOUNG BLACKBIRDS IN NEST.

from me. Although this bird does sing, it is mostly a very silent species

Watched some Rabbits feeding by the side of a small copse. With the aid of the field glass, saw what a wonderful eye this animal possesses. Although sideways to me, he was staring directly at me. Animals that are hunted have the eye so placed that they can see in almost any attitude, and in any direction; animals that hunt can only see directly in front of them.

30th.Dull. Raining. Skylark singing more this last few days.



MAY.



ROBIN'S NEST.

built in an old tin can, containing six eggs, two of the eggs being pure white.

MAY.

"Every little rill,
And every small bird trilling joyfully,
Tells a secret tale of hope, and love, and peace."

1st.—Lovely day. No Hawthorn in flower for the May girls, but plenty of Blackthorn, and this was freely used in its place. Skylark, Cuckoo, Chaffinch heard singing, and Rooks "crooing," from my garden. Lark singing at 8 p.m. It is light until that hour now. No wind.

2nd.—Another charming day. Chaffinch "pinking" in the garden. South-west winds.

3rd.—Raining and blowing a miniature gale. Skylark singing in spite of unpropitious elements. Went to Zoological Gardens again to-day, and, referring to my recent notes, it may be interesting to my readers to know that amongst the food consumed for twelve months by the various animals may be mentioned—234 horses, weighing 92 tons; 186 Goats, weighing 869 stone: 1,260 quarts of Shrimps. Further, £800 was given for the young Giraffe in the collection; and since 1898 eleven Anthropoid Apes have died in the Gardens. Tuberculosis is stated to have been the cause, and the Society is considering whether better housing will stop the mortality.

4th.—Nice day, good deal sunshine, but changeable winde. Plum-blossom setting, but we want several hours nice steady rain. Potatoes through. Irises "heading up" rapidly. Sycamore in full leaf.

Mr. W. A. Nicholson, Portobello, N.B., kindly sends me the following notes on the Earthworm:—

"The common Earthworm plays an important part in the animal kingdom in many ways. Without this creature and others of its kind, plants and shrubs would not grow well, and the flower gardener would probably lose his most cherished blossoms. The Earthworm is a beautifully-constructed creature, and is generally found crawling

about at nightfall. His food consists of earth, and the minute creatures therein contained, besides the leaves of weeds and other flowers.

"At midnight I have watched him slowly popping his head out of his hole (which at times is a good depth below the surface, and in the case of clay soil at depths varying from ten inches to two feet and more), drawing his body cautiously forward, and resting for the matter of three or four seconds, again sliding "upward" until almost the whole of the body is withdrawn. Now, should a movement be

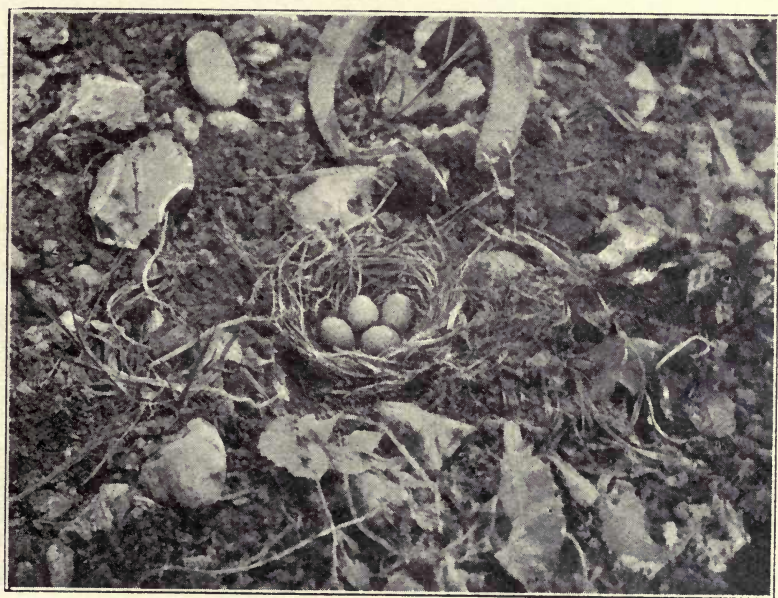


NEST AND EGGS OF ROBIN IN A TOMATO-TIN.

made, such as a smart rap on the ground with the palm of the hand, the Worm disappears with incredible swiftness; but dig on the far side of his retreat, and, with amazing rapidity, he will quickly crawl out again and make haste to escape. He mistakes the digging for a Mole, who consumes the Earthworms in large numbers."

A correspondent asks me to give a list of regular British breeding Birds. The following may be subject to revision, and I shall be pleased to receive information as to any birds included or excluded, which

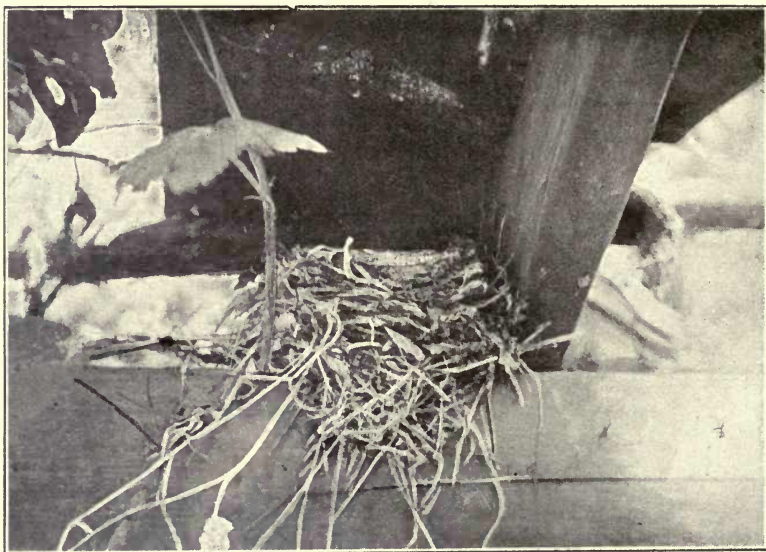
should or should not be set out as regularly breeding in our Country:— Blackbird, Blackcap, Bullfinch, Buntings (Cirl, Corn, Reed, Snow, and Yellow), Buzzard (Common), Capercaillie, Chaffinch, Chiff Chaff, Chough, Coot, Cormorant, Crakes (Corn and Spotted), Creeper (Tree), Crossbill, Crows (Carrion and Hooded), Cuckoo, Curlews (Common and Stone), Dipper, Divers (Black and Red-throated), Dotterel, Doves (Ring, Rock, Stock, and Turtle), Ducks (Eider, Tufted, and Wild), Dunlin, Eagles (Golden, and White-tailed), Falcons (Hobby and Peregrine), Flycatchers (Pied and Spotted), Gadwall, Gannet, Garganey, Gold-



NEST AND EGGS OF SKYLARK.

finch, Goosander, Goose (Grey Lag), Grebes (Great Crested and Little), Greenfinch, Greenshank, Grouse (Black and Red), Guillemots (Black and Common), Gulls (Black-headed, Common, Great Black-backed, Herring, Kittiwake, and Lesser Black-backed), Harriers (Hen, Marsh, and Montagu's); Hawfinch, Hawk (Sparrow), Heron, Jackdaw, Jay, Kestrel, Kingfisher, Kite, Lapwing, Linnet, Magpie, Martins (House and Sand), Merganser (Red breasted), Merlin, Moorhen, Nightingale, Nightjar, Nuthatch, Osprey, Ouzel (Ring), Owls (Barn, Long-eared, Short-eared, and Tawny), Oyster-catcher, Partridges (Common and Red-

legged), Petrels (Eork-tailed, Fulmar, and Stormy), Phalarope (Red necked), Pheasant, Pipits (Meadow, Rock, and Tree), Plovers (Golden, Kentish, and Ringed), Pochard, Ptarmigan, Puffin, Quail, Rail (Water), Raven, Razor-bill, Redbreast, Redpoll (Lesser), Redshank, Redstart, Rook, Sandpiper (Common), Scoter (Common), Shag, Shearwater (Manx), Sheldrake (Common), Shoveler, Shrike (Red-backed), Siskin, Skuas (Common and Richardson's), Skylark, Snipe (Common), Sparrows (Hedge, House, and Tree), Starling, Stonechat, Swallow, Swan (Mute), Swift, Teal (Common), Terns (Arctic, Common, Lesser, Roseate, and



BLACKBIRD'S NEST.

An unusual place for a Blackbird's nest, being placed on the edge of an old shed.

Sandwich), Thrushes (Mistle and Song), Titmice (Bearded, Blue, Coal, Crested, Great, Long-tailed, and Marsh), Twite, Wagtails (Grey, Pied, and Yellow), Warblers (Dartford, Garden, Grasshopper, Marsh, Reed, Sedge, Willow, and Wood), Wheatear, Whimbrel, Whinchat, White-throat (Greater and Lesser), Wigeon, Woodcock, Woodlark, Woodpeckers (Great Spotted, Green, and Lesser Spotted), Wrens (Common and Golden-crested), Wryneck. Total, 177.

5th.—A lovely day. There are a good many young Rooks about now, looking quite strong and healthy. Heard the Chiff Chaff,

Cuckoo, Nightingale, Song Thrush, Willow Warbler, Great Tit, Common Wren, Skylark, and Blackcap.

Redbreast singing at 8 p.m. Many small Moths flying about in the garden. No wind.

6th.—Heard the welcome call of "Cuckoo," and the joyous song of the Skylark whilst at breakfast this morning.

Following Wild Flowers blooming to-day:—Dandelion, Red and White Dead Nettles, Shepherd's Purse, Coltsfoot, Common Chickweed, Heartsease, Groundsel, Garlic Mustard, Greater Stitchwort, Wild Strawberry, Dog's Mercury, Dog Violet, Wood Sorrel—from which oxalic acid is made, if I mistake not—Sallow, Wild Hyacinth, Herb Robert—the first I have seen in flower this season—Ground Ivy (a flower not known to many people, but a very delicate and pretty plant). Cuckoo Flower (also known as Bitter Cress and Lady's Smock), Daisy, Woodruff (the first seen in flower), Lesser Celandine, Primrose—owing to the lateness of the season they are in the height of their beauty now—Cowslip, Blackthorn, Cuckoo Pint (or



NEST OF COMMON WREN,
built in bundle of old horseshoes.

Wild Arum), Forget-me-not, Furze, Hop Trefoil, Hedge Parsley, Common Veronica (this is a Speedwell, and it is interesting to note that there are over a dozen species in Britain), Bugle Flower, Upright Meadow Crowfoot, Strawberry-leaved Potentil (*Potentilla Fragariastrum*)—mistaken by many people for the Wild Strawberry, but the leaves of the Potentil are a good deal smaller—and Wood Crowfoot. Are we not getting a formidable list now? There are 35 enumerated here, and these, of course, only refer to those I actually saw in a restricted district.

The Avian choir to-day was made up of the following members:—Greater and Lesser Whitethroats, Skylark, Greenfinch, Redbreast, Tree

Pipit, Mistletoe Thrush—about which I shall have something to say later—Willow Warbler, Yellow Bunting, Common Wren, Blackcap, Chiff Chaff, Blackbird, Nightingale, love song of the Kestrel, Ring Dove, Jay, Nuthatch, Pheasant, Chaffinch, Song Thrush, Lapwing, Swallow (twittering), Rook, Coal and Blue Tits, call note of the Goldfinch heard, Common Partridge. All the above, which may be



NEST AND EGGS OF LITTLE GREBE.

classed as song birds, were singing, with the exception of the Goldfinch. Of course those species such as the Rook, Jay, Ring Dove, Kestrel, Nuthatch, Pheasant, &c., were heard uttering their various calls or alarms.

Following trees in flower:—Wych Elm, Maple, Crab, Birch, Oak, Larch, Ash, Walnut, and Hornbeam. How delicate the now green foliage of the latter, as compared with the withered brown of a few weeks ago!

Hawthorn flower buds bursting, and should be well out in a few days now. Found a sort of Wild Raspberry with a reddish blossom, instead of white. I cannot trace the species, and shall be glad of any information hereon. I found it blooming freely in a thick Fir spinney, in a gravelly soil. It grows to a height of from four to five feet, in brownish canes, of course.

Saw a very strong young Song Thrush, a bird of the year.

Saw or heard all three British Woodpeckers—the Great and Lesser Spotted, and the Green Woodpeckers. The Lesser and Great Spotted were “drumming,” the Green was uttering its laughter-like notes.

The most plentiful bird to-day, next to the Skylark, was the Nightingale. I never heard so many before; they were within ear-shot all the time I was out.

Found various Song Thrushes' and Blackbirds' nests; also Hedge Sparrows, Common Wrens, Yellow Buntings, and Nuthatch. Eggs in the Thrushes' nests only.

Very interesting to watch a pair of Nuthatches nest building in hole of tree, carrying in dabs of mud, &c. A pair of Starlings have apparently chosen a similar nesting site within an inch or two of the Nutjobbers.

Spruce, Scotch, and Larch Firs very fine now. Privet flower showing well, and should soon be out. How the children ransack the woods, hedgerows, and fields for Wild Hyacinths, Primroses, Cowslips. Crowfoot (commonly known, like the Celandines, as Buttercups), and Daisies; one meets them now along the country lanes with their various posies of wild flowers. Why not give practical lessons in Natural History throughout every school in the land, inculcating and fostering a love for the same when the mind is young? This would do the children far more good than the too frequent cramming which now takes place.

Found dead Rook by the wayside, and noticed the powerful beak, and the bald patch behind the same. How few people know the difference between a Rook and Crow, or that there is any difference.

Warm showers. Has the reader noticed how similar the *alarm* cry of the Song Thrush is to that of the Blackbird!

The following notes were written by me this evening as I sat under an Oak in a small copse:—7 p.m. Jay screaming, Willow Wren singing, Skylark soaring and singing. Blackcap uttering alarm note,



NEST AND EGGS OF MOORHEN.

Plimpton

Nightingales "juggling" everywhere, Tree Pipit singing, Song Thrush just started in the Avian chorus, also Chaffinch, Yellow Bunting, and Greater Whitethroat; Cuckoo chiming in, Rooks cawing, Ring Doves cooing, Great Tit mimicking, "cock-up" of Pheasant, Red-breast singing. Ten minutes ends. Written as heard.

Meadow Barley out. How comes this to be reckoned as a wild flower? Is it not a grass? Listening to the songs of birds nearly all day, I can, as I write, still hear the voices of the members of the woodland choir; it has been a day of universal bird song from the first break of dawn until the last silver and golden streaks of a blazing, fiery sunset disappeared in the west. Raining at night; dark early.

7th.—Rain of last night has made the country-side look beautiful, Dull, and rather cold. No wind. Skylark and Hedge Sparrow singing. Saw Whinchat hovering over some Furze bushes on railway bank.

Beautiful moonlight night. It may not generally be known that there is another bird besides the Cuckoo which lays its eggs in the nests of other birds. This is the Cow bird (*Molobrus benariensis*) which belongs to the Sturnidæ, or Starling family. It inhabits the United States of America.

8th.—Dull, but good growing weather. No wind. Skylark singing joyously. House Sparrows gathering nesting materials in the garden. Robin and Chaffinch singing; also Willow Warbler, Greater White-throat, and Song Thrush.

Robin, Song Thrush, Hedge Sparrow, and Blackbird singing at 8 p.m. Rooks cawing in the Rookery at the same hour.

The nest of the Common Wren illustrated on page 105 has a history attached to it. It was built in a bundle of thirteen old horseshoes at Everthorpe Hall, Brough, Yorks. The female bird was found drowned in a pail of water, but the male bird took care of and reared the young ones.

9th.—Raining. Very nice, gentle rain will do much good. Lark, Song Thrush, Chaffinch, and Hedge Sparrow singing, the former in a marked manner, because of the dull day. (See my former remarks hereon).

10th.—Raining. Rather cold. No wind. Groundsel in full flower just now. Lark singing. Icy-cold, moonlight night; not the sort of night to hear the Nightingale, for instance.



CUCKOO'S EGGS IN HEDGE SPARROWS' NEST.

On the 6th I mentioned that I heard the Mistle Thrush singing. Readers will perhaps think I am contradicting myself, for I have noted on more than one occasion that this bird ceases singing in March! On the 6th, however, when the showers came on, the Mistle started singing quite loudly. There is no mistaking him. Thus one may easily fall into grievous error, but birds vary in such a way that one should never be surprised at anything which takes place in the feathered world. As, however, the belief about the early song-ceasing of the Mistle Thrush is general, it is an interesting observation that Mr. Spary—the local Taxidermist—and I both heard it more than once on the 6th May. When the rain ceased, the Storm-cock was silent.

11th.—Lovely morning, but cold. Male Chaffinch “pinking” and female “weeping” in the garden. Brilliant sunshine to-day; after the recent rains, very welcome.

Saw a Swift skimming in the air for the first time this season, and watched some Swallows in their graceful aerial evolutions.

A South African Eagle was shot a few days ago by Mr. James Harris, of Southend, on the estate of Colonel E. R. Ellis, Dartford, Kent. It is surmised that the bird had escaped from some travelling menagerie whilst passing through the town. The Eagle measured 3 feet 4½ inches from its beak to tip of tail.

Cold N. winds. A friend saw the Swifts here on the 6th, and House Martins the following day, namely, the 7th.

Skylark soaring and singing at 8 p.m.

The Red-backed Shrike is a Summer visitor to the British Isles, and should by this time have arrived some days. It is a veritable murderer, preying upon Mice, Shrews, small birds, Frogs, Lizards, and large Insects, Caterpillars, and Humble Bees. I say “murderer,” because the Butcher Bird—by which name this bird is far better known in the country—seems to take life very often for killing sake. Other local names are those of Murdering Pie, Nine Killer, Cheeter Flasher, Flusher, Jack Baker, and Whisky John.



SMALL TORTOISESHELL
BUTTERFLY.



YOUNG CUCKOO JUST HATCHED.

12th.—Very dull; threatened rain all day. Cuckoo and Hedge Sparrow heard. Rose buds showing nicely now; Pinks almost bursting. The following Butterflies may be looked for during May:—Swallow-tail, Large Garden White, Small Garden White, Green veined White, Bath White, Orange-tip, Wood White, Pale Clouded Yellow, Clouded Yellow, Brimstone, Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary, Pearl-bordered Fritillary, Marsh Fritillary, Glanville Fritillary, Heath Fritillary, Comma, Large Tortoiseshell, Small Tortoiseshell, Peacock, Camberwell Beauty, Red Admiral, Painted Lady, Speckled Wood, Speckled Wall, Marsh Ringlet, Small Heath, Green Hairstreak, Common Copper, Short-tailed Blue, Brown Argus, Common Blue, Adonis Blue, Holly Blue, Mazarine Blue, Grizzled Skipper, Dingy Skipper, and Chequered Skipper.



PEACOCK BUTTERFLY.

13th.—Still very cold N.E. wind. Fitful gleams of sunshine. One or two new wild flowers found in bloom to-day. The following is a complete list of all those which came under my observation:—Garlic Mustard, Red, White, and Yellow Dead Nettles, Dandelion, Shepherd's Purse, Groundsel, Heartsease, Common Chickweed, Charlock, Upright Meadow Crowfoot, Daisy, Common Veronica; Cherry, Greater Stitchwort, Dog Violet, Ground Ivy, Hedge Parsley, Wild Hyacinth, Cowslip, Wild Strawberry, Bugle Flower, Crab—very sweet-smelling, this latter—Dog's Mercury—(flower rapidly giving way to seed-pods)—Primrose, Strawberry-leaved Potentil, Lesser Celandine, Wild Flowering Currant, Cuckoo Flower, Woodruff, Common Orchis—interesting to note that some specimens of this flower smell and some do not; and how beautiful the purple looks against the fresh green grass and the golden Crowfoot—Lamb's Tongue, Furze, Hop Trefoil, Shepherd's Needle—delicate white flower, with needle-like seed vessels when the flower petals are shed—Yellow Rocket, Bird Cherry—very beautiful flower this latter—Scentless Mayweed, Thyme leaved Speedwell, and Common Fumitory.

A very pretty little Rush is in flower now. The Scientific name is *Luzula campestris*. It is found growing freely in meadow land, parks, and the like.

To-day in the woods I noticed how beautiful was the grey bark of the Oak, the dark green foliage of the plentiful Dog's Mercury, the



YOUNG CUCKOO JUST FINISHED EJECTING EGG AND YOUNG BIRD.

increasing violet colour of the Wild Hyacinth, here and there the yellow petals of some lingering Primroses, and the flaring gold of the Celandine. Wherever there is an open stretch of woodland these harmonious blendings of colour cannot fail to attract attention and admiration at this season of the year.

I quite expected to find the Hawthorn in blossom to-day, and was disappointed in not being able to include it in my list of flowers in bloom. The cold winds of the last few days have kept it back, but at the first approach of warm weather the knotted blossom buds will soon open, and the milk-white blossoms, hanging in exquisite festoons along the hedgerows, reveal to us that Summer is near at hand.

The cold N. and N.E. winds to-day have kept many birds silent, and the only feathered musicians heard were the following:—Skylark, Greater Whitethroat—how this bird hovers and flutters over the top of some hedgerow when singing, as if suspended by wire—Nightingale, Common Wren, Chiff Chaff, Tree Pipit, Song Thrush, Greenfinch, Blackbird, Willow Warbler, Coal Tit, Hedge Sparrow, Chaffinch, Cuckoo, and Great Tit.

Found several Blackbirds' and Song Thrushes' nests with eggs, also Yellow Bunting's, containing one egg, and Ring Dove's, with the usual couple of milky-white eggs. These latter were easily visible through the frail stick platform which serves as a nest.

Watched a few Swallows and House Martins skimming across the meadows, and some Lapwings on the arable land.

Found some Song Thrush's eggs, evidently sucked by a Jay. This is not the first time I have found this evidence of a feathered poacher this Spring.

Saw a Turtle Dove. This is, of course, a Summer visitor only to the British Isles. First one seen this season.

The Spotted and Pied Flycatchers should be here now. The latter I have only found nesting on one occasion, and that was at Aspley Heath, in Bedfordshire, some six or seven years ago. The eggs of the two birds are entirely different, as also the plumage. The Spotted species lays an egg bluish white in ground colour, blotched, and spotted with light brown, whereas the Pied Flycatcher has a greenish-blue egg.

In plumage the Pied bird is very attractive, and cannot very well be mistaken for any other English breeding bird, being black on the tail and upper parts, and also on the wings, with white on the



OXLIPS.

central coverts. The scapulars have white edges, and the under parts are white.

The Spotted Flycatcher is ash-brown above, a dark line on the central head feathers. The under parts are whitish, brown streaks on sides of a longitudinal character; flanks tinged with red. The Spotted Flycatcher is $5\frac{1}{4}$ inches in length, and the Pied species 5 inches only.

There are no less than four hundred species of Flycatchers, and they are all confined to the Old World.

Cold, clear moonlight night.

14th.—Brilliant sunshine, but blowing quite a gale, and very cold. Birds silent.

15th.—Awfully cold again. Sunshine, but cold N.E. winds. Chaffinch heard singing.

Mr. W. E. L. Wattam, 54, Towngate, Newsome, near Huddersfield, kindly sends me the dates of arrival of the Pied Wagtail in the Huddersfield district for the past nine years. In some districts this bird is found all through the year, but in others, the West Riding of Yorkshire, for instance, it is purely a Summer visitor.

DATES OF ARRIVAL OF THE PIED WAGTAIL IN THE HUDDERSFIELD DISTRICT.

1892.	1893.	1894.	1895.	1896.
March 20.	April 1.	March 27.	April 15.	March 21.
1897.	1898.	1899.	1900.	
March 27.	March 12.	March 10.	March 4.	

16th.—Dull; still cold and blustering. Skylark singing.

17th.—Not nearly so cold; wind dropped considerably.

It is many years since we have experienced such a cold, blustering May. Skylark singing.

I attended the annual meeting of the Selborne Society to-day. The Right Hon. James Bryce, M.P., occupied the chair, in the unavoidable absence of the President (the Right Hon. Lord Avebury), and spoke strongly on the destruction of various forms of wild life. Professor G. S. Boulger, the Rev. Professor Henslow, Sir Robert Hunter, and others also spoke. The Society is in a flourishing condition—that is to say, there was a good balance on the right side for the year 1899—but the number of country members has fallen off, though this has been made up by an increase in the town members. I can thoroughly recommend the objects of this Society to my readers. It does an admirable work, and the Council consists of men and women who are by no means faddists,



NEST OF COMMON WREN.

or aggressive sentimentalists. Efforts are to be made to start junior branches of the Society. and this appears to me to be a step in the right direction. What we want to get at is the training of the younger generation in the proper groove. To interest people in the Fauna of Britain will do far more good than a whole Blue Book of Laws, and we should endeavour to obtain a system of education whereby Natural History is accorded a more prominent position than it has had in the past. We want to show what there is to be gained by studying the various forms of wild life with which our Country abounds, and moreover, proving that the cultivation early of a pure and sensible hobby is one of the strongest safeguards against all dangers. Let us interest and amuse the young minds, pointing out to them the pleasures to be derived in hunting with a bloodless intention, and let us not be satisfied until we have done our best to get a more general acknowledgment of Natural History introduced into the curriculum of every school in the land. Protection and preservation by Law may do good, but to my mind private enterprise, and personal effort, will be of much more lasting benefit than mere force.

18th.—Warmer, but little sunshine.

The foliage of the trees and hedgerows just now is, for the most part, greenish yellow and many reddish tints. It will never be more attractive than during the next few days, especially if nice and warm.

The Chaffinch has found his song beautifully now, and it is quite a treat to listen to him running down the scale, and then up again at the concluding stages. The cadenza at the end of his song is charming.

Colder towards evening, but Skylark soaring and singing up to a late hour.

There are an enormous number of Lilies of the Valley in the London streets and shops now. One can obtain a beautiful bunch for the modest "brown." The beautiful snow-white, bell-shaped petals throw out a lovely aroma, and a more exquisite flower is difficult to find, the more especially so when seen growing in Nature's own garden. From whence does the supply of these flowers come into the London markets?

19th.—Warmer. Skylark singing more joyously than ever. He, too, blithe bird, seems to realise the welcome news which has just reached us of the relief of Mafeking, and small wonder, for is not the Lark a thorough Britisher?

Readers of my notes will have noticed the lateness of the arrival of our Summer Migrants. Many times when I had hoped to draw



NEST AND EGGS OF COMMON PARTRIDGE.

first blood I have been bitterly disappointed, but I find I am by no means the only one, for Mr. Warde Fowler failed to discover in the Chipping Norton district a single Summer Migrant up to April 10th. On that date, he says in the "Zoologist," he rambled without reward for three hours in various localities.

20th.—Brilliant sunshine, nice gentle breezes. The dark blue of the Iris makes a brave show in the garden now; Pinks bursting, Ferns making rapid headway, Currants and Plums well set. Lilac and Laburnum in its beauty. Sitting in the garden, what a variety of small insects alight on the hands and other parts of the body and what pretty specimens some of them are.

Following flowers found in bloom to-day:—Shepherd's Purse, Thyme-leaved Veronica, Groundsel, Heartsease, Chickweed, Dandelion, Yellow Rocket, White and Pink Campions, Hedge Parsley, Red, White, and Yellow Dead Nettles, Daisy, Shepherd's Needle—the bank of needles looks very curious now that most of the flower petals have disappeared; Charlock, Bush Vetch, Scentless Mayweed, Upright Meadow Crowfoot, Hawthorn, Hop Trefoil, Holly, Cuckoo Flower, Garlic Mustard, Red Clover, Dove's Foot, Crane's Bill, Blue Sherardia Greater Stitchwort, Wild Hyacinth, Cowslip, Herb Robert, Dog's Mercury (going rapidly off flower this latter and the double seed vessels very prominent now), Ground Ivy, Goosegrass (just coming into flower), Common Avens, Woodruff, Cuckoo Pint (the woods and hedgerows covered with these Wild Arums), Dog Violet, Bugle Flower, Field Scorpion Grass, and Germander Speedwell. Oxeye Daisies nicely headed up now.

Birds heard to-day were:—Chaffinch, Skylark (it has been another glorious day of universal Lark song), Swallow and House Martin (is there any rural sound more delightful than the twitter of the Swallow and the warble of the Martin under the eaves), Hedge Sparrow, Redbreast (seems to have resumed singing again this last few days, after a temporary cessation), Greenfinch, Starling, Bullfinch (weeping), Song Thrush, Blackbird, Tree Pipit, Lapwing, Rook, Cuckoo (one particular bird I heard to-day could not get the "koo" at all), Pheasant, Jackdaw, Greater Whitethroat, Willow Warbler, Yellow Bunting, House Sparrow, Nightingale, and Green Woodpecker. When a song bird is enumerated, and nothing is said to the contrary, it may be assumed that the species was in song.

A specimen of the Cachalot, or Sperm Whale, appeared in the Thames, near Greenwich, yesterday. It is stated that this Whale has not been observed so far up the Thames since the Autumn of 1878.

When one comes to look carefully at a clean specimen of the much-despised House Sparrow (especially the male bird), he is quite a fine-feathered being. A particularly fine male was on the garden fence to-day, and by the aid of my field glasses I could not help admiring the black throat, and breast, reddish-brown back, and white cheeks and neck sides. They are busy nesting in the roof, carrying large white feathers, and other paraphernalia, with surprising



NEST AND EGGS OF ROBIN.

regularity. The male and female both take a great interest in the nest-building, and a pair I watched to-day apparently had a great discussion in the spouting as to whether a certain piece of straw should be used, or put into stock. The chirpings (Sparrow language, no doubt), were almost deafening, and several Sparrows on the neighbouring chimney-pots seemed to evince considerable interest

in the proceedings of this particular pair. Perhaps it was their first attempt at nidification.

Mountain Ash and White Chestnut out in flower, Pink Chestnut nearly bursting, Laburnum flowering, Copper Beech very beautiful now, also Star of Bethlehem, various Pansies and Wallflowers. Lilies of the Valley and Tulips, in cottagers' gardens. How creditable these latter look, with the trim edging of Box and neatly-designed beds and borders. There is no greater treat than to ramble through a village and note the beauty of the villagers' little plots, and inhale the sweet aroma.

Watched a pair of Starlings carrying in grubs to a nest of young ones, safely hidden in the roof of an old shed. What a noise they make each time a new course is served up! I found a dead Starling in the fields to-day, lately deceased. What a pity to kill such a useful bird; but perhaps it died a natural death, although birds do not seem to me to die naturally to any extent, for it is not often one comes across a great many corpses. How, then, do wild birds die? The question has already been asked by Richard Kearton, and others. There is little doubt a closer study of this question would elicit a great deal of interesting information.

Saw some young Lapwings (what pretty little feathered creatures, to be sure), and stood watching the parent birds endeavouring to lure us away. Has the reader ever looked at this bird through a good, powerful glass? The beautiful crest, and dark and white plumage, is quite a study.

Along a tall Hawthorn hedge I spotted a male Red-backed Shrike, better known as the Butcher Bird. What a fine bird the male is in his grey crown and nape, black lores and ear-coverts, chestnut-brown mantle, grey tail-coverts, and rose-buff under parts, and how prominent the black stripes near the eye. The sharply toothed and hooked beak is very distinguishable, too. Presently the female joined her mate, and at they seemed to have business in the neighbourhood, curiosity led me to search that hedge. The result confirmed my suspicions, for I found the nest, pretty high up, containing two beautifully-marked eggs. The birds were mostly silent, uttering a weak note, something like the call of the Yellow Bunting. This pair of birds have certainly not lost much time since their arrival amongst us during the first few days of the month.

I rambled this evening through one of the wooded parks with which Hertfordshire has been blessed; the avenues of Beech, Elm,

and Oak were charming in thir grandeur. Underneath, and round about them, the Sheep and Lambs were to be seen, and, amongst them, several prying Jackdwas "grubbing" about. On a quiet Summer's evening, how peaceful the scene! The screaming whistle of the railway engine, the din of the roaring traffic, the hum-drum of business life does not penetrate here. Nature reigns supreme, calm, tranquil, and beautiful. What a change for the mind, and a stimulant for the body, to ramble amongst such sylvan scenes, and take notice of the wild life which abounds. The gentle lullaby of the Sheep bells, and the distant clanging of the church bells for evensong, harmoniously softened by the distance; the cooing of lovable Ring and Turtle Doves, the "cock-up" of a starled Pheasant, the alarm cry of a Blackbird, the laugh of a Green Woodpecker, the cawing of still busy Rooks, the trilling lay of a still ascending Lark, the skimming of some Swallows along the golden meadows, these are some of the rural sights and sounds which for me hold such an abiding sway.

21st—Lovely day, nice gentle breezes. Irises out in a blaze of splendour in the garden. I would repay the reader to examine one of these blossoms under a glass. The construction, consisting of nine conspicuous portions, three outer segments, three inner segments, and the three petaloid stigmas covering the stamen, and the beautiful colourings, are very wonderful.

South to South-east winds, Skylark singing at 8.30 p.m.

22nd.—Rained heavily during last night, and drizzling best part of to-day. Windy and dull. Skylark singing joyously, as is his wont on these cheerless days. S. to S.W. winds. The Swifts seem to have arrived over the country generally during the first week of May. Most people are of the opinion that this bird belongs to the Swallow family. Some writers assert it is the largest of the Swallow tribe in our Country; but this is quite an error, as it is the sole representative in our Avi-fauna of the tribe to which the Humming Birds are attached. The general construction of the bird and its life and habits are such that a closer study would doubtless reveal many interesting facts

Now that the Chickweed has commenced to seed, Linnets may be looked for where it abounds. They are very found of the seeds.

At a meeting of the Ashford Sparrow and Rat Club on the 16th. it was stated that 12,000 Sparrows (whether they were all House Sparrows is extremely doubtful, I should think), and 5,000 Rats had been killed during the year 1899 in that district alone.

23rd.—Dull, and very showery, afterwards bright. Splendid growing weather. Skylark and Hedge Sparrow singing.

I am pleased to hear, on the best authority, that several Dartford Warblers were seen quite recently in Dorsetshire.

Swifts were seen at Ringwood on April 26th, a very early date.

24th.—Two of the salient features in our inland flora just now is the blue-carpeted woods, the Wild Hyacinths, and the whitened hedgerows, various umbelliferæ, viz., Wild Carrot, Parsley, &c. The Hawthorn, although in flower in some places, is not yet the mass of milk-white bloom which some nice warm weather would bring about.

Showery, but, between the showers, bright sunshine. The wiseacres prophesy a continuance of unsettled weather for some weeks. We shall see how far their predictions come true.

I cannot vouch for the accuracy of the statement, but it is said that a record which has been kept for over 80 years reveals the fact that the harvest yield may be gathered from the leafing of the Oak and the Ash. If the Oak leafs first, it is predicted that a dry and hot Summer takes place, and consequently a bountiful harvest; and when the Ash is the first to throw open its leaves, the prospects of a good harvest are supposed to be endangered. In this district the Oak was in leaf some little time before the Ash.

25th.—N.W. winds. Skylark singing gaily day after day. Heavy showers, and brilliant sunshine, alternately, throughout the day.

26th.—Dull weather first thing, but fine afterwards. Warm. Greater Whitethroat heard singing near my garden.

The fields are one mass of golden now, beautifully relieved by the green of the grasses. Of course, the golden is the several species of Crowfoots, or should the plural be Crowfeet? I rather think it should be Crowfoots, but old writers were wont to write Crowfeet.

Most people know that the Cuckoo builds no nest, but places its eggs in the nests of other birds. An instance is recorded, however, by Herr Muller, a well-known German Naturalist, of a Cuckoo sitting on, and hatching, her own fledgling. Three Cuckoo's eggs were found by Herr Muller in a hollow under a tussock of grass. The female bird was daily observed sitting, and in due time a young sprawling Cuckoo was hatched, the two remaining eggs proving to be sterile. The youngster was well looked after by the parent bird until he was able to take care of himself, but this must be regarded as a very exceptional, and extraordinary, occurrence.



CHERRY BLOSSOM AND HAPPY FACES.

27th.—Summer-like weather to-day, tempered with gentle breezes. The Rooks were up long before me this morning, and when I looked out of my bedroom window they were dibbing in a cornfield in front of my house. They were not touching the Corn (and it is, of course, well up, now), but were undoubtedly after the Wireworm. Half-a-dozen or so were also there at 8 p.m., searching as hard as ever. They strutted along in real marshalled order, "doing" the ground properly, and well. The first bird-sounds which broke upon my ear this quiet Sabbath morning (mornings which give to this fair land of ours a beauty almost Divine), were the cry of the Cuckoo, the ever-welcome lay of the Skylark, and the crow of some gay chanticleer a few gardens off.

Incidentally, I may remark how the reddish head of the Common Partridge, and the fine red of the Hare, show up when bird, and animal, are studied through a good pair of glasses. What looks to the naked eye like a mere clod of earth turns out to be a Hare, and suddenly one may observe just over the tops of the standing grass the red head of the Partridge. Cannot the latter move at a tremendous rate, and with eyes and ears alert the whole time? Stopping, ever and anon, to take stock of the surroundings.

Flowers found in bloom to-day include the following, several of which it will be noticed are new to our lists:—Groundsel, Shepherd's Purse, Dandelion (fast blowing off now to seed), Chickweed, Charlock, Thyme-leaved Veronica, Yellow Rocket (going off slightly), Scentless Mayweed, Hop Trefoil (in its beauty now), Hawthorn (not yet the white mass which will soon be out), White, Red, and Yellow Dead Nettles, Goosegrass, Garlic Mustard (has nearly run its course in many specimens), Shepherd's Needle (the needles very prominent now), Pink and White Campions, Dove's-foot Crane's Bill. Bulbous Crowfoot, Upright Meadow Crowfoot, Germander Speedwell (this beautiful blue flower is at its height now), Meadow Saxifrage (locally known as Milkmaids), Long-rooted Cat's Ear, Daisy, Goat's Beard, Red Clover, Common Fumitory, Marsh Marigold, Cuckoo Flower, Brooklime (this is a very beautiful species of Speedwell, and grows for the most part in marshy situations), Ground Ivy, Bugle, Greater Stitchwort, Common and Bush Vetches (of the two the flower of the former is much brighter and does not grow in a cluster like the Tufted Vetch), Herb Robert, Holly, Wild Hyacinth, Lamb's Tongue, Corn Crowfoot, Hedge Mustard, Blue Sherardia, Heartsease, Forget-me-not, Bird's Foot Trefoil, Strawberry-leaved Potentil, Wild Strawberry, Woodruff, Dog Violet, Primrose (about the last time it will be

included for the year 1900), Oxeye Daisy (just coming along nicely), Soft-knotted Trefoil, Frog Bit (the only British species), Hedge Parsley, Lesser Stitchwort, Prickly-headed Poppy, and White Clover. The Dog's Mercury has now ceased flowering. It will be observed that our list includes over 50 species of familiar Wild Flowers in bloom, a fact upon which we may congratulate ourselves, and there are many more "coming on." Bird Cherry still in flower, Ash forging ahead (the Bullrush-like flowers are well worth observing), Traveller's Joy foliage out, Elder Flowers bursting, White or Silver Poplar very lovely as the wind turns the leaves over, White and Pink Chestnuts out (the former mostly, and the aroma very sweet), flower of the Wych Elm going quite brown now, catkins of the Willow dying down, Burdock leaves prominent (called erroneously Wild Rhubarb), Yellow Iris (or Flag) showing well in the ditches, together with various Rushes, which are in flower; Dogwood well budded, and ought to burst soon, a remark which also applies to the Mealy Guelder Rose, or Wayfaring Tree. The flower of the Maple (*Acer campestre*) is very delicate now, but the *Acer platanoides* is seeding; Red May out, also Rhododendrons, and flowers of Larch Fir enlarging considerably; Ferns up nicely in the woods. There are many Grasses in flower now. It is well worth making a study of these, for they are both various, and beautiful.

Birds heard or seen to-day:—Swallow, Chaffinch, Greater, White-throat (the fluttering flight over the top of the hedgerows as this delicate Warbler sings is interesting and amusing), Tree Pipit (one of the most plentiful birds seen and heard on my rambles to-day), Willow Warbler, Nightingale (the alarm note is something like "witt-kr-r"), Song Thrush, Blackbird, House Martin, Common Wren, Yellow Bunting, Greenfinch, Ring and Turtle Doves, Starling, Chiff Chaff, Green Woodpecker, Robin, Great Titmouse, and Hedge Sparrow. I think it will be better in future if I put my Bird Notes under two headings, thus:—(1), "Birds singing"; (2), "Birds heard, or seen." That will enable the reader to obtain at once information as to the birds in song. Of course, some song birds will probably only be heard uttering an alarm note, or some call, and not singing. These will then go in under the second heading, together with birds heard, which cannot be classed as song birds, and birds seen.

Saw some young House Sparrows which could just fly, nest of four young Chaffinches, four Song Thrushes, and four Blackbirds. What Frog-like throats the young Thrushes possess, and how they squat with head bolt upright, the yellow mouths ready to receive the

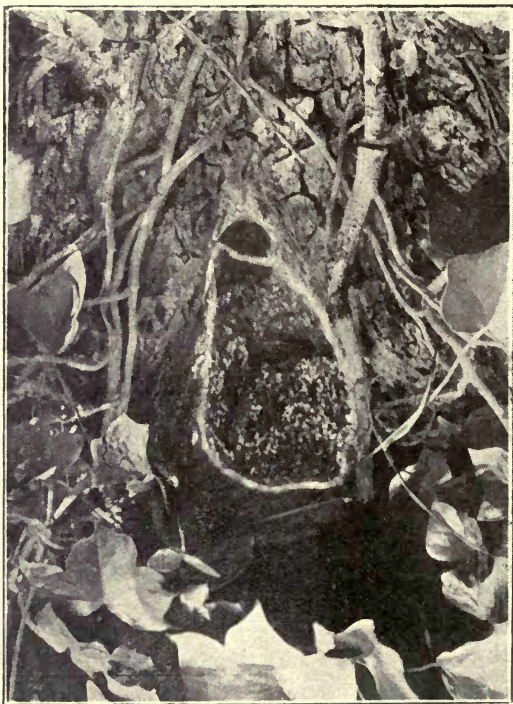
tasty tit-bit. I found a nest of young Thrushes and Blackbirds within a yard of one another to-day in a Hornbeam hedge. What stumpy fledglings the Blackbirds are, compared with the Thrushes. Four Hedge Sparrow's eggs found sitting hard, also House Sparrows, and two or three incomplete Common Wren's nests. Watched a small colony of Sand Martins, and some Swifts, careering round and about a small lake. How delicate the mouse-coloured back of the little Martin, and what a large bird the Swift is by the side of it; but



NEST AND EGGS OF LINNET.

they are not members of the same family, as is supposed, so I ought not to make that observation, perhaps. The flight of the Sand Martin is rapid, and uniform; at least, that is how it strikes me. Pied Wagtail by the water's edge, also House Martin gathering mud. Male Chaffinch heard "weeping" like the female. I saw the bird. Saw two or three pairs of Carrion Crows hawking about some fields

skirting a wood; also some Rooks. I may state that a Rook may be distinguished from a Crow by having a patch of whitish skin at the base of the beak. The Rook is of a more glossy black than the Crow, and is a shade smaller. Rooks nest in colonies, and go about in flocks; the Crow, on the other hand, is a solitary bird, and does not nest in colonies. The food of the two birds is also different, and the Crow utters three caws, thus, "Caw, caw, caw," whereas the Rook is not limited to three, and each note is longer in being drawn out. My notes, of course, refer to the Carrion Crow, as the Hooded Crow has only to be seen to be identified.



ENTRANCE TO NEST OF NUTHATCH,
showing how the birds filled up the hollow in the tree trunk,
with clay. There must have been several pounds weight of the
material used; quite a task for such small birds to accomplish.

Hen Pheasant flew overhead, and "cock-up" of several males heard in the woods. Ring Doves seen in the Firs; Field Mice creeping in the hedges; Lapwings seen and heard.

In the lakes, and streams, saw some Roach, Rudd, Perch, Minnows, a school of Dace (as my friend who was with me remarked), and a few Jack, the fresh-water Shark!

A great many Orange-tip Butterflies out to-day. How delicately-marked these are. A few Frogs hopping about the hedge banks, some fairly large young ones.

A pretty Ladybird settled on my hand to-day. The ground colour was greyish-brown, with seven spots on either side of the black line which runs down the centre. Cannot these minute creatures move quickly when occasion requires? Ladybirds are most useful, especially their larva, which feed on the Green, and other Flies.

Noticed to-day the Cuckoo Spit, or Frog Hopper. Most country people have observed the white froth which may be seen at this season of the year on leaves, and stalks, in the garden and along the hedge-row. Few, however, know what it is, or that in the midst of it may be found the larva of the Froth Fly. It is a soft greenish-yellow insect, with six legs, and broad head. The reason it is enveloped in the froth may be for protection from the heat, or for the purpose of concealment. The mature Froth Fly is a wonderful jumper, and, although not more than a quarter of an inch in length, is said to leap a distance of six feet, which means that it can jump 288 times its own length! The name of Cuckoo Spit was given to the larva because of the old notion that it was the saliva of the Cuckoo. Walton was in error in his "Compleat Angler" in stating that it was the young Grasshopper.

28th.—Dull, and showery. Splendid growing weather. There was an eclipse of the Sun to-day. I watched it in London. It took place between 3 and 5 p.m., and was quite visible to the naked eye. First there was a little touch on the bottom of the sun, then a well-defined swelling, as if a cloud with a roundish top had got in the way. Slowly, but steadily, the shadow of the Moon marked across the Sun, until the latter looked like a new Moon. Then, when all was over, the Sun again shone out with great brilliancy, and splendour. The air, being so clear, the eclipse was witnessed for the first time by a great many persons.

Skylark soaring, and singing, at 8.45 p.m. It is light until that hour now.

29th.—Strong Westerly breezes, but brilliant hot sunshine. The Broom is in flower beautifully now. How delicate the yellow petals

hang upon the pliant branches. Cowper and Wordsworth both noticed the beauty of this familiar wild flower. The former says:—

“The Broom,
Yellow and bright as bullion unalloyed.”

And Wordsworth:—

“The Broom,
Full-flowered, and visible on every step,
Along the copses runs in veins of gold.”

30th.—Dull, and somewhat cold. Fitful gleams of sunshine. Whilst wielding the willow this evening the following songsters were to be heard on every side:—Willow Wren, Chaffinch, Blackcap (this last-named Warbler almost surpassing himself). Nightingale, Blackbird, Song Thrush, Common Wren, and Robin. The Great and Coal Titmice were also very noisy, as well as the Starling and the Green Woodpecker.

The hedgerows are one mass of white now with the snow-white blossoms of the Hawthorn, and in a few days time this flower will be out in its fulness. It is certainly some days late this season.

31st.—Dull, and cold, with North winds. We have started fires again!! Skylark still singing. My notes with regard to this minstrel of liberty and love are very frequent, for the reason that no matter when I am in, or near, my house I hear half-a-dozen of these birds pouring out their delicious melodies. They are very plentiful indeed in this district, but, alas for the Nature lover, the town is rapidly extending its area, and many an old green lane of our boyhood has been effaced beyond recognition. The expulsion of the Larks as neighbours of mine is, I am afraid, near at hand. A year or two will probably see them driven away from their present haunts, for by that time bricks and mortar will have replaced the cornfields, the meadow lands, and the other rural surroundings, but sufficient for the day is the evil thereof.

JUNE.



NEST AND EGGS OF NIGHTJAR.

JUNE.

"Now comes the rosy June, and blue-eyed hours,
With songs of birds, and stir of leaves and wings,
And run of rills, and bubble of bright springs,
And hourly burst of buds to flowers,
With buzz of happy Bees in Violet bowers."

1st.—Dull, cold, raining, blustering N. and N.E. winds, cheerless. That is how June, 1900, has been ushered in. What an entry, to be sure! Goodness only knows when the Summer is going to start. I hear we are very forward down South to what they are in Scotland. A friend who travelled down to-day says that the hedgerows are not yet green in the North. He was so pleased to see the green Spring flush in England as he crossed the border. Skylark singing at night in the teeth of a bitter gale.

2nd.—Hard rain during last night. Morning opened dull and threatening, but weather looks like clearing up for the Whitsuntide holidays. The Skylark keeps my spirits up; he is in incessant song from the time the first rays of the sun flash across the dew-spattered meadows until between 8 and 9 p.m. There were several Starlings in the garden this morning chattering away. It is the first time I have seen them since the hard weather. Can it be that these identical birds were some of those which I befriended in the hour of need? They surely did not recognise the surroundings. When last they came, my garden was robed in white, and only the bare stems of the trees lent colour to the scene. Now, however, what a change! Various-hued Pansies are mingling amongst sweet-smelling Pinks; the gorgeous flowers of the Iris are shown off by the sword-shaped leaves. These latter cut as sharp and deep as a keen-edged sword; but, being a delicious green all the year round, are highly prized. When last the nervous Starlings visited me, no fine rows of Marrowfats and Runner Beans, no healthy rows of Potatoes, nor well-set Currants

and Plums, were on view. How the scene has changed! Yet, if there was no Winter, we should not appreciate the budding Spring, then, later, the perfect Summer; and, again, the Autumn, the closing of another year of Nature's life. If the birds sang all the year round we should not listen with such expectancy for the first cry of "Cuckoo," for the first strains of the Nightingale, the delicate warble of the Willow Wren, the voice of the amorous Turtle Dove,



NEST AND EGGS OF NIGHTJAR.
(A closer view).

the "crex, crex" of the ventriloquial Landrail, and so on. If the flowers bloomed the year through we should not search with such eager eyes for the first golden petals of the Lesser Celandine, the yellow Primrose, the snugly-hid, sweet-smelling Violet, the shooting Corn, or, to turn to another side of the picture, for the first sight of

a Brimstone or Orange-tip Butterfly. If there was no cold we should not appreciate the heat. If there were no dry seasons, we should not welcome the refreshing rains, and I might enlarge. This all evolves because of the Starlings having come to my little plot again after some three or four month's absence.

There is a sweet-voiced Nightingale singing every night now within a stone's throw of my house. Singing when all is still, the bird seems to be the only living creature astir, save for a passing Barn Owl, or the "cock-up" of a startled Pheasant away in the woods to the North and East of us. Choosing the night, as well as the day, for exercising his vocal powers has made the reputation the Nightingale enjoys as a song bird; but in my wanderings about I often meet those who, on hearing the bird for the first time, are much disappointed. At the same time, there is something so captivating about its song which one cannot express in words. It seems as if the bird in singing directly at the listener, and there comes over the surroundings such a sweet loneliness that one cannot be other than awe-stricken when participating in such a delightful feast. And to think that such marvellous music can be played by such a tiny feathered musician, and such a plain-clad bird! Philomel has no rainbow tints, no metallic hues like the glittering Kingfisher, no speckled breast like the snail-loving Thrush. Nature has it that a brick-dust red plumage is sufficient for the sweet-voiced Nightingale, and, often mistaken for a Sparrow, only the Ornithologist knows the bird when its melodies are not being poured forth in all their richness and cadence. It was "jugging" away after 11 p.m. to-night.

3rd.—Beautiful day, brilliant sunshine, nice breezes. It is leafy June now, and the country will never look better than at present

Several new familiar wild flowers are rapidly coming into bloom, and my list to-day includes the under-mentioned:—Garlic Mustard (going off very much now), Hedge Parsley, Dandelion, Sainfoin (what a picture indeed the whole fields of this pretty plant, which serves a double purpose, i.e., an ornament to the country side, and food for the cattle), Charlock, Goosegrass, Hop Trefoil, Groundsel (rapidly going off flower), Heartsease, Shepherd's Needle, Germander Speedwell, Thyme-leaved Veronica, Chickweed, White Dead Nettle, Hawthorn, Forget-me-not (this must not be confounded with the Field Scorpion Grass, a smaller and not nearly so bright-coloured wild flower), Greater Stitchwort, Herb Robert (are not the stalks and leaves of this latter a beautiful red at times?), Common Avens, Bush Vetch, Wild Strawberry, Lamb's Tongue, Woodruff (place some of this in



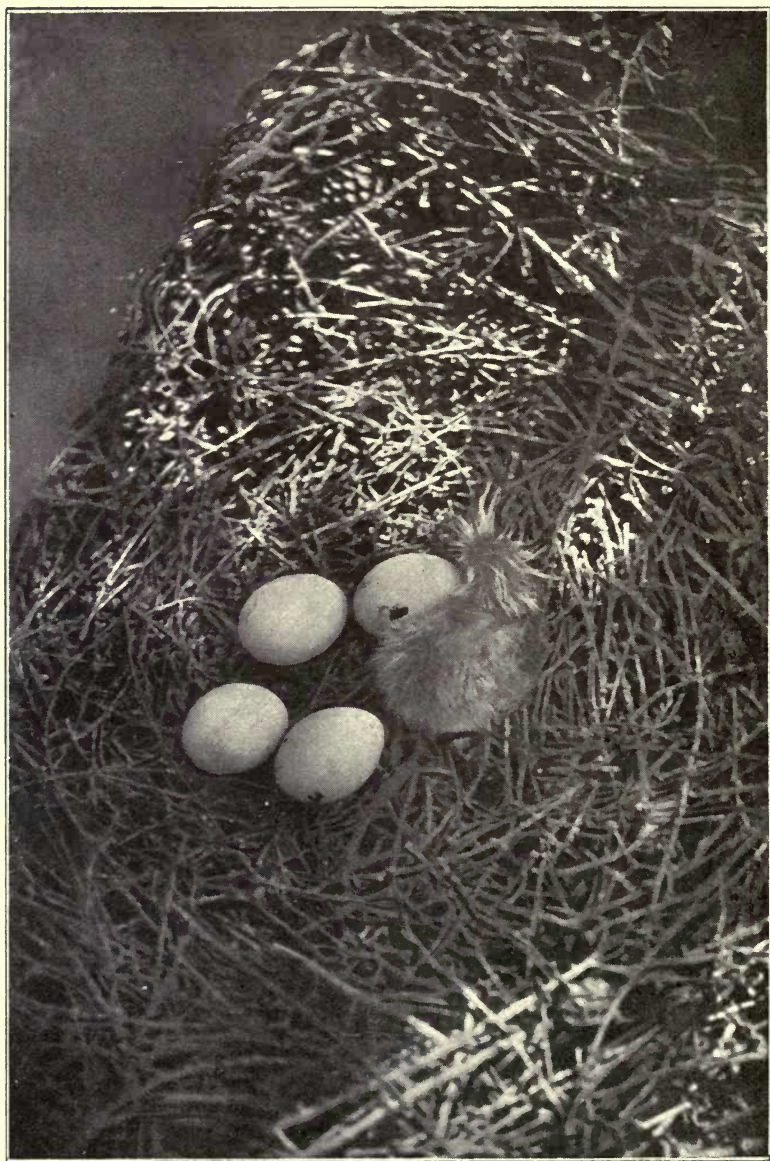
SITE OF HERON'S NEST. (SEE X).

your kerchief box, or drawer, and you will be surprised at the sweet aroma), Oxeye Daisy (these are in their beauty now; the railway banks and fields are spotted with them, like so many white stars in the heavens), Wild Hyacinth (these have not lasted very long this season), Daisy, a lingering Lesser Celandine (surely the last time we shall be able to include it in our list), Ground Ivy, Bugle Flower, Strawberry-leaved Potentil (Richard Jefferies calls this the Barren Strawberry, I believe), Cowslip (a backward clump without a doubt), Red Clover, Common Orchis, Furze, Broom, Cuckoo Pint, Red and White Campions, White Clover, Dove's-foot Crane's Bill, Yellow Rocket; Wood, Bulbous, and Upright Meadow Crowfoots; Red Dead Nettle, Hedge Mustard, Yellow Dead Nettle, Comfrey, Primrose (in a shady coppice I found half a dozen, as if they were very reluctant to depart), Soft-knotted Trefoil, Long-rooted Cat's Ear, Brooklime, Ragged Robin, Scarlet Poppy, and Cow Parsnip. We have here nearly sixty species, and it is a fact worth noting that the roadside is much the best district for observation. Here wild flowers bloom freely; here we may see many birds which in the thick cover are unheard and unseen. A lane is the finest vantage ground a lover of Nature can have, and I have had many a striking illustration of this when I have had permission to naturalise on some secluded estate, and found, after all, that in the nearest highway I could have seen and heard more in half an hour than a whole week on the favoured ground, where "All trespassers will be prosecuted."

Birds singing:—Skylark, Greater Whitethroat, Tree Pipit, Red-breast, Nightingale, Song Thrush, Hedge Sparrow, Common Wren, Chaffinch, Willow Wren, Blackbird (often sings when sitting in an Oak tree), Blackcap, and Garden Warbler. The song of the lastnamed somewhat resembles that of its near relation, the Blackcap.

Birds heard or seen:—Ring Dove Cuckoo, Yellow Bunting, young Robin (in the speckled, Thrush-like plumage, uttering the alarm note of the parent birds), Rook, Chiff Chaff (I do not propose to call this bird, and several others, song birds, but to include them under my second heading), Great Titmouse, House Sparrow, Bullfinch (one may find several nests of this bird, and yet never catch a glimpse of that rosy-breasted male bird), Swallow, House Martin, Swift, Lapwing (is anything more beautiful than the black-and-white plumage against the fresh-rolled brown soil?) Turtle Dove, Jay, Pheasant, Starling (with a fat grub in its beak), and Partridge.

I came across half-a-dozen Turtle Doves flitting along a row of Oaks, and tried hard to follow them, but they were too nervous and



NEST OF HERON, FOUR EGGS AND ONE FLEDGLING.

fitful in their movements. A screaming Jay caught sight of me and gave the signal to all around that there was "a Naturalist on the prowl," and one might as well look for a needle in a bundle of hay as for Doves after the sentinel of the woods had sounded the alarm. I like the Jay, but many a time when I am stalking carefully through the almost impenetrable wood, fearing every step I shall alight on a dead branch or stick and send a shrill crack through the coppice, an artful Jay darts out and shakes the welkin with its "kak-kak-kak."

Many Brimstone, Orange-tip, Meadow Brown, and Small White Butterflies out to-day. Is not the first-named a delicate species?

The foliage of the Ash is worth noting just now; the Honey-suckle is all budded and I hear it is in flower in the district; the Pink and White Chestnuts are simply gorgeous now; also the Rhododendrons. More Frogs about in the ditches to-day than I have noticed all the year.

Did the reader ever hear uttered that stupid solecism the "Crows in the Rookery?" or, again, the "Hay in the Straw stack?"

The leaves of the Burdock are very conspicuous now, also those of the Butter Bur. I know a bank by a river where the latter is found for some hundreds of yards.

A young Rabbit stopped a yard or two in front of me to-day, and refused to move. I stood stiff and rigid until I had to give in, and off he scampered. How shooting has made these animals the nervous nervous creatures they are.

Amongst the nests found to-day I may mention a Chaffinches containing six eggs; creeping about the eggs were what I took to be small bird lice; and a Garden Warbler's containing five eggs (incubation very far advanced). Nest composed of dead grasses externally and a few pieces of cotton, lined with finer grasses and horsehair; also came across a Bullfinch's nest with five eggs, and a good many Blackbirds, Song Thrushes, and Greenfinches, containing eggs and young. There does not seem to be so many Chaffinches' nests about this year.

A trusty friend saw the Spotted Flycatcher here on the 27th May, but it was doubtless amongst us some days previously. Under the Fir trees, has the reader ever noticed how pale the Wild Hyacinths are? Many to-day I found almost white. No sun ever penetrates in these thick glades; hence that dark blue tint of the open is absent.

Young Rooks still in the nest. What a variety of notes the



THREE YOUNG HERONS.

parents utter: "Caws, Croos," and what not! The nests hereabouts are mostly built in Oaks.

The outspread tail of the Lark is worth noticing as the bird descends. A field-glass is necessary to see it to perfection. Many Cuckoo Spit about to-day.

Sweet-scented Vernal and many other Grasses in flower now.

The Oak has gone off flower, as also the Ash, and the seeds of the Wych Elm are quite brown. In a Willow thicket the ground was strewn with silvery catkins. Here, again, the sun rarely penetrates, the ground is moist, and various Rushes grow in profusion.

The Toadflax is making rapid progress. This flower is called locally Snapdragon. The giant yellow flowers will not be out yet for some weeks.

Cuckoo and Skylark still heard at 8 p.m.

4th.—Lovely day for Whit-Monday. Brilliant sunshine. N.E. winds.

5th.—Breezy, but brilliant sunshine. I have already remarked in my writings that if the observer wishes to fill his note-book he should ramble by some placid stream, bordered by woods, bushes, or hedgerows, or down some leafy lane. To-day I wandered for miles, tearing my clothes, getting thorns all over my body, through some scrubs, and saw practically nothing. Not a bird was flushed. A Willow Wren now and then was to be heard, and a stray Whitethroat or two flickered overhead, but otherwise all was silent. The scrubs consisted of Oak for the most part, but there was a nice sprinkling of thick Hawthorn and brambles, and here one would imagine nests might be found. All day we rambled through the scrubs (the rays of the sun pouring down upon us), but without success. True we found about half a dozen Song Thrushes' nests, and noted that they were composed externally of moss; one or two Bullfinches and Hedge Sparrows, but that was the total result of our eight hours search. What is the reason no nests were forthcoming, and why such an absence of bird life? The season was right, the weather was right, the surroundings seemed right, but the birds were not. Coming out into a lane we at once heard the Nightingale, the Chaffinch, and saw many small birds and two pairs of Red-backed Shrikes on the hedge by the railway bank.

Striking the River Colne, where it joins the Ver, we were much more entertained than we had been all day.



THE THREE YOUNG HERONS
photographed at closer quarters than in the last illustration.

The golden meadows stretched right across on either side of the crystal stream (though the back waters were as thick as mud), and a "school" of Rooks were busy jumping and hawking in the midst of an extra special clump of golden Crowfoot and purple Clover and snow-white Oxeye Daisies. Under the bridge a pair of Swallows had built their grass nest, slightly muddled near the base, and placed on the top of one of the underneath boards. Over and under the bridge these birds were ever and anon flying; May-flies danced (rather than flew) close to the margin of the river; and a fine two-pounder Trout was very fond of dobbling about in the shallows with his tail out of the water. From the belt of woodland came the welcome cry of the Cuckoo, the cooing of the Doves, the plaintive notes of the Chiff Chaff, the Willow Wren's little melody, and the form of a Kestrel appeared over the tree-tops. Our last hour in this charming district was worth the whole day we had spent in the scrubs, where no wild life was astir. Here we may sit by the hillside, trace the stream as it winds along to empty itself in the Thames, watch the farmer trudging homewards (greeted as he passes by the favourite Nags), and the holiday-makers gathering posies of wild flowers (to take home, perchance, to the stifled garret in East London), and enjoying for a few brief hours of respite the glorious freedom and beauty of this fair land of England. We see in the distance the farm labourer, bag slung on shoulder, pipe in mouth, going home to a well-earned rest; we notice the farmyard, into which a few cattle are at the moment being driven; we bring within range the home of a good English sportsman, the Ivy-clad walls trimmed wonderfully neat and natty, and the lawns decked out like a miniature paradise. As we sit watching, we notice someone gradually coming through the avenue of trees in the distance, some two miles off. It is the genial owner himself, coming towards the stream to cast the fly, in the endeavour to lure the speckled Trout. It is about an hour before sunset; the tropical heat and the noontide glare has passed; in fact, by the river it is getting quite chilly; but the fish are on the move at this hour. When high up, one can place the hand almost on any particular field or spot in the valley below. It is a fine scene; it leaves an impression behind never to be forgotten, and when we visit the district again we know what a treat is in store for us.

6th.—Heavy rain last night. Dull and breezy early, afterwards bright. Nightingale singing near my house at 10 p.m.

7th.—Heavy rain last night, but brilliant sunshine this morning.



SEA-KALE IN BLOOM.

Things should make rapid headway now. Farmers tell me these welcome rains will save the hay crop from being the poor one it looked like being a few weeks ago. Lark singing, and House Sparrows fighting like demons in the garden. Thunder showers during the day.

8th.—Thunder showers; bright between. Lark and Whitethroat singing near the garden. The Sparrows early this morning were uttering all manner of indescribable notes on the housetops.

9th.—Showery. The Hawthorn does not seem to be that mass of white which is generally to be seen during May or early June; moreover, it does not look now as if it will be so dense this season. Being so late, it seems to have missed that huge mass of blossom.

A list of Butterflies which may be looked for during June is appended:—Swallow-tail, Black-veined White (this latter is quite a rare species now, and is included for what it may be worth), Large Garden White, Small Garden White, Green-veined White, Orange-tip (the male only has the delicate tip of orange on the wings, the female being like a very small White Butterfly; this is the last time the Orange-tip will be included in our lists, as during this month its all-too-brief existence finishes), Wood White, Pale Clouded Yellow, Clouded Yellow, Brimstone, Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary, Pearl-bordered Fritillary, Silver-washed Fritillary, Greasy Fritillary, Gleanville Fritillary, Heath Fritillary, Comma, Small Tortoiseshell (this species is to be seen out and about during the whole Butterfly season almost), Peacock (one of the most beautiful and one of the commonest of the Vanessas), Red Admiral, Painted Lady, White Admiral (this is now an uncommon species), Mountain Ringlet (strictly speaking, this is really the only Alpine Butterfly found in Britain), Wall Butterfly (this is double-brooded), Grayling, Meadow Brown, Marsh Ringlet (sometimes called the Small Ringlet, but as the Mountain Ringlet—*Erebia epiphron*—is also called by the same name in many districts, the two species must not be confounded), Small Heath (or Least Meadow Brown), White-letter Hairstreak, Dark Hairstreak (the eggs are laid in the Autumn on twigs of the Sloe), Green Hairstreak (the smallest species of the genus), Small Copper (believed to be three-brooded; a common, but exquisite Butterfly), Short-tailed Blue (a very rare Butterfly), Brown Argus (although classed with the family of Blues, has no blue about it), Common Blue (one of the jewels of our English country-side), Adonis Blue, Azure Blue, Mazarine Blue (an exceedingly rare species), Bedford Blue (smallest of the Blues; almost, I believe, the smallest British Butterfly), Large Blue (possesses a weak flight, large

size, and dark appearance makes identification from rest of Blues easy), Duke of Burgundy (found in and near woods; called erroneously the Duke of Burgundy Fritillary), Grizzled Skipper, Dingy Skipper, Large Skipper, and Chequered Skipper. This gives us a list of over forty species, but July and August will see our lists well over fifty.

10th.—Very hot; brilliant sunshine, strong Southerly breezes; over 120 degrees in the sun, 80° in the shade.

Flowers found in bloom to-day:—Dove's-foot Crane's Bill (how beautiful the red tints on some of the ground-loving leaves), Hedge



A COVEY OF PARTRIDGES.

Stachys, Garlic Mustard, Thyme-leaved Veronica (nearly run its course), Forget-me not. Groundsel (nearly finished flowering), Shepherd's Purse (rapidly going off), Charlock (the fields are one mass of yellow from this flower now, but I doubt whether the farmers view the same with the amount of pleasure which the Nature-lover does), White Campion, Cuckoo Pint, Germander Speedwell, White Dead Nettle, Shepherd's Needle (notice particularly now the needles; the effect is very striking when seen for the first time), Hawthorn, Hedge Mustard (at its best now), Bulbous, Upright Meadow, and Wood Crowfoots, Chickweed, Dandelion, Heartsease, Long-rooted Cat's

Ear, Yellow Rocket (mostly on seed now), Hop Trefoil, Sainfoin, White and Red Clovers, Soft-knotted Trefoil (what a beautiful flower this really is when closely examined), Daisy, Oxeye Daisy, Greater and Lesser Stitchworts, Yellow Dead Nettle, Herb Robert, Woodruff, Bugle, Avens, Goosegrass, Wild Strawberry (the fruit rapidly forming now), Wild Hyacinth (mostly gone to seed, and almost the last time it will be included, I fear), Pink Campion, Lamb's Tongue, Broom, Scarlet Pimpernel (often called the Shepherd's Weatherglass, because its blossoms only expand in fine weather), Ground Ivy (nearly finished flowering), Bird's Foot Trefoil (how delicate the light and dark golds and coppers of the petals), Bush Vetch, Scentless Mayweed, Red-berried or White Bryony (called by old writers Wild Vine), Common Fumitory, Bramble (the first seen out this season), Bladder Campion, Scarlet Poppy (a good many headed, but few in flower), Red Dead Nettle, a solitary Dog Rose in flower, but the buds only want some warm sunshine before they open their sweet painted petals; Holly (the ground strewn with fallen petals), and Furze.

Birds singing: Chaffinch (in very strong song now), Skylark, Black-bird, Willow Warbler, Tree Pipit (how interesting to watch the song-flights of this bird), Greater Whitethroat (this seems to be a much commoner species than the Lesser Whitethroat), Redbreast, Common Wren (singing loud and long now), Nightingale (coming through a spinney in the evening I heard over half a dozen singing such continuous strains that it seemed as if no other sound was to be heard), Blackcap (the more I listen to this bubbling songster the more I am charmed with it), Song Thrush (does not seem in such good song now, probably because of the nesting season).

Birds seen or heard:—House Sparrow, Rook, Starling, Jackdaw, Yellow Bunting. Ring and Turtle Doves (how gentle the flight of the latter as compared with the noisy flappings of the former), Cuckoo. With regard to this latter, I saw at least half a dozen, males and females, chasing one another in the wood, the males calling continuously. I counted how many times one particular bird uttered its cry without a moment's cessation, and it stopped at 111 times, and only then to fly to an adjoining tree-branch and start again! This bird certainly meant to make his voice heard in the woodland choir. Now and then he started the "kook," but did not finish on the "koo," and on two occasions he went "kook, kook, koo." I did not think that Cuckoos were so plentiful this season, but after to-day's observations I think there are more than ever; Lapwing, Great Titmouse (quite noisy again to what he has been

this last few weeks), Chiff Chaff, House Martin, Partridge, Swift (very high up), Mistle Thrush (a pair seen flying away together across country in a tremendous hurry).

There is no more harmonious blending of colour now than the white of the Woodruff, the blue of the Germander Speedwell, and the pink of the Herb Robert. These three flowers may be found together on the banks bordering woods. The Corn is well up, but the ears are not yet to be seen. It is very rare that June goes out, however, without a wheat ear showing, although there is an old Beech tree in



FINE CATTLE.

my neighbourhood which has carved on it the following interesting particulars:—

“No Wheat carted, November 17th, 1776.”

When first carved, the inscription was doubtless near the base of the tree, but as it grew the letters appeared higher and higher, until now they are out of sight. My grandfather has known this tree for nearly fifty years, and the letters were much lower, of course, when he was a boy than now.



JUNE ROSES.

The Oats are well out, but the crops look thin. Has the reader ever looked at a field of waving-blades of corn at this season through a field-glass? The effect is very striking.

There are any amount of Wild Cherries about. The Nuts can just be seen, and the trailing Black Bryony (the leaves and flower buds knotted like rope), is well worth noticing now.

What a variety of small Beetles cross the path of the Rambler, like dark little jewels darting about in the sunlight. There are many hairy caterpillars about, too. Cannot they move at a rate? How they curl up into the ball of protection!

How often the Note-book comes out at this season. Walking along, I make half a dozen notes, one after another, then place it back in my pocket (a fairly large one, by the way, in case of anything which requires taking home), but it has hardly had time to settle down before a new sight or sound requires noting. This is a busy season for the Naturalist.

The bunches of keys on the Ash are like so many birds nests at a distance.

How the Rabbits scamper into the cover as the Rambler walks up by the side of a wood!

Several nests found to-day, chiefly Greater Whitethroats, Hedge Sparrows, Song Thrushes, Blackbirds, Ring Doves, and Chaffinches. One nest of young Blackbirds interested me very much, as one of the fledglings (almost ready to leave the nest) was perched on the side of the nest keeping guard. It was a young cock; and he did not in the least resent my acting as Paul Pry, seeming to be quite interested in my inquisitiveness. How innocent they look! They as yet know little of the outer world, of its hardships and trials, and the cunning ingenuity of man. There were only three eggs in the Chaffinches' nest, but the female permitted me to touch her before she would get off, and the male bird was perched by her side. How a bird's eyes glisten when an intruder appears; the little feathered being trembles and knows not whether to leave the precious charge or remain sitting, trusting that the Rambler is a friend and not a foe.

I had a good sight of the Willow Warbler in the woods to-day. He was tripping along the pliant branches of the Firs opening his wings as he went, after the manner of the Pelican when strutting along; the delicate yellow breast was quite noticeable.

The Honeysuckle is bursting, and the various red, pink, and yellow tinted Sycamore leaves in the woods, where the sun hardly ever penetrates, are quite a study.

Rhododendrons are still blooming freely, and various Rushes are in flower. Many Small Garden White, Orange-tip, Meadow Brown, and Brimstone Butterflies flying about; also many small Moths.

One is struck with the beauty of common things, as well as the Science of them. To-day I noticed the red-tipped leaves of the Common Dock-weed; even these have a charm not to be despised.



PRETTY SINNERS.

The Great Bat is 'bout. This species, the Pipistrelle, and the Long-eared Bats, are the three best known in our Country.

We rambled down a favourite green lane this evening, and could not help nothing the natural impulse there always is to sit down on that soft green spot by the lichened gate. We somehow never pass it when the weather is fine. It is quite an institution in our rambles in that particular lane.

The Quaking Grass is plentiful now, and deserves special mention, a remark which also applies to the Bracken, which is a delicious green. The cones of the Firs are coming along very quickly; it was only at Easter that we noted the appearance of the flowers.

11th.—Scorching hot; 127° in the sun, 85° in the shade. Summer at last!! Blackbird, Skylark, and Rook heard at 3 a.m. in the order written. The two former were singing, the Rooks passing from the rookery towards the South, probably to their feeding grounds. Chaffinch and Greater Whitethroat singing near my garden.

Haycutting proceeding in the district now. The farmers tell me the crops are quite ripe, and that they want to make hay while the sun shines, but the crops are very poor and thin. There is no "bottom." Clear, full moon at night, and sweet country scents when the dew had descended.

12th.—Very hot again. Thunderstorms, but not so heavy as are reported this morning in many districts. As usual, the Skylark was towering towards the clouds quite early this morning, singing as beautifully as ever he did. Is not the singing season of this bird a lengthy one? We will perhaps analyse it later on. Chaffinch and Greater Whitethroat singing in the vicinity of my garden.

A golden moon at 9 p.m., but a storm came over from the South and obscured it from view. The lightning was very vivid, but the thunder was not at all heavy.

13th.—Cooler. The heat wave has apparently passed. The "three hot days and a thunderstorm," which comprise the proverbial English Summer, has been strikingly illustrated since the 10th.

14th.—Heavy rain storms. Some thunder. Skylark singing. One of the sights of the floral world just now is the snow-white mass of Oxeye Daisies on the railway banks and in the meadows. Why is it that these hardy flowers grow so freely by the side of a railway? Another salient feature of the country-side now is the light green tassels on the Fir trees. As seen against the blackish branches the effect is charming. The foliage on most trees is in its loveliness now, and cannot fail to attract the attention of those who see in these things a sense of the beautiful and the grand. One may be captivated with the scenery of many a foreign land, but here in Britain we have sufficient to charm and interest the most selfish observer. I could spend all my days in well-wooded Hertfordshire, and even then leave unexplored a hundredth part of the Fauna of this delightful home



YOUNG CUCKOO FOURTEEN DAYS OLD.

county. It does not possess the magnificence and grandeur of some parts of our Country, but for me it has an attraction in its many woods and coppices, green lanes, and meadows, which sticketh so close that the more I get about the county the more I am enamoured with it.

15th.—Showery. Heavy rains last night. They will do a great amount of good to the crops and gardens. They were wanted badly; but the early haymakers will not receive them with pleasure, I am afraid.

I am pleased to hear from a friend that he has heard a Nightjar near my house on more than one occasion this Spring. I have not come across the bird since I resided in Bedfordshire, five years ago. There, it was no uncommon occurrence to hear as many as half-a-dozen in one evening uttering their curious song. The district there, however, is very sandy. They are very partial to a soil of this nature.

It may interest my readers to know that this bird does not usually perch on the branch of a tree crosswise, a birds in general do, but lengthwise. As it moves about as dusk it has the appearance of a large, sombre Swallow.

16th.—Bright sunshine. Over 100 degrees at 8 a.m. Chaffinch “pinking” in the garden; Skylark singing overhead. Nice rains towards evening, but these did not stop the Swifts from having their accustomed night fly. I think there is no more striking sight in the bird world than the last night fly of these interesting birds. How they rush and screech through the air, whirling and twisting, reeling and turning! It is very rare that they alight on the ground, and when they do so it is difficult for them to rise again owing to the shortness of the tarsi. Being on the wing so many hours out of the twenty-four, it seems extraordinary that the Swift does not get thoroughly tired out; but a bird’s endurance on the wing is wonderful. The Albatross has been known to follow a ship for days, and I believe weeks, together, without resting.

17th.—Fitful sunshine, but fine; warm.

Wild flowers found blooming to-day:—Garlic Mustard (very nearly finished, the long seed pods very prominent now), Red, White, and Bladder Campions, Germander Speedwell (not nearly the mass it was some few weeks since), Common Fumitory (the foliage of this is very delicate), Charlock (found some White Charlock to-day), White Clover (the reader would do well to look at this flower through a glass; each petal is like a large Sweet Pea; those who have never examined it would be much surprised at the effect as seen through a microscope) Red Clover, Hedge Mustard (the little patches of yellow on the tall

and long-branching stems very noticeable), Groundsel (almost finished flowering), Dove's-foot Crane's Bill (in its beauty now, the red and green leaves and pink flowers very pretty), Long-rooted Cat's Ear (looking at a good specimen leaf, one may easily see why this has been named Cat's Ear, as it much resembles the ear of that animal), Hop Trefoil, Chickweed, Bulbous, Wood, and Upright Meadow Crowfoots Forget-me not, Goosegrass (or Cleavers: "Sweethearts" they are called locally, because when thrown on a person's back they "cling"), Daisy, Shepherd's Purse, Dandelion, White Dead Nettle



NEST AND EGGS OF NIGHTINGALE.

(this species seems to bloom much longer than the Red and Yellow Nettles), Lamb's Tongue (this is the small Plantain), Cow Parsnip, Hedge Parsley, Nipplewort, Scarlet Poppy, Scarlet Pimpernel (the scarlet petals, yellow anthers, purple stamens, and the mauve-coloured ring at the base of the flower will repay a close examination), Hearts-ease (examine the feathers in the centre of the flower, hardly noticeable to the naked eye), Oxeye Daisy, Common Avens (the dark-reddish seed heads very curious), Shepherd's Needle, Bush Vetch, Dogwood (in beautiful flower now), Greater Stitchwort (rapidly going to seed,

the yellowish seed pods quite a feature of the country-side), Herb Robert, Bird's-foot Trefoil, Wild Strawberry, Lesser Stitchwort (coming along nicely, and although not throwing such a large flower-head as the greater species, it takes its place very appropriately at this season), Water Figwort, Cinquefoil (the number of petals of this flower vary a good deal; I counted several to-day with four, five, and six petals), Bugle Flower (this seems to grow in woods for the most part), Ragged Robin, Foxglove (how pleasing to see these flowers out again), Woodruff (gone off a deal), Soft-knotted Trefoil (this flower has very rapidly died down; only a few flower-heads found to-day), Red Dead Nettle, Hawthorn (probably the last time it will be included as in flower), Bramble, Honeysuckle (the aroma from this beautiful flower excels all others, I think), White Bryony, Black Bryony (how different the long strings of flowers of this Bryony to those of the White species), Holly, Yarrow (the first I have seen in flower), Furze, Meadow Vetchling (this must not be confounded with the Bird's-foot Trefoil), Small Willow Herb, Sow Thistle (these and others of this orders close their flower-heads quite early in the afternoon), Field Thistle, Field Convolvulus, Woody Nightshade (how the yellow centre shows up against the dark petals), Common Mallow (there are six or seven species in Britain), Hedge Stachys, Scentless Mayweed, Dog Rose (the delicate Nature-pained petals, so fragile, and yet so beautiful, are now a feature of our inland flora). Even the various tints of green in the garden are worth noticing. For instance, to take a few at random; the pea-green of the Peas, the dark olive-green of the Plum leaves, the greyish-green of the Pinks and Cabbages, the yellowish-green of the Nutmeg, the dark leaves of the Sycamores and Potatoes, and the light green swords of the Iris.

The leaves of the Thyme-leaved Veronica are quite dead, as if bleached by the sun. They are khaki-coloured now; one or two flower-heads to be seen, but it has run its course for this season.

The rains of the past week have brought the wheat ears along wonderfully. So much so, that where a week ago a single ear could not be seen, to-day ears were to be observed everywhere. The Elder is in blossom now; also the Wild Guelder Rose. The smell of the latter is beautiful.

The green cones of the Scotch Fir are out now, and the new cones of the Spruce Fir are quite a study. Rhododendrons still in flower. The Burdock and Mullein are heading up rapidly. The Scarlet Poppies amongst the Oats are well-knowns features of the



YOUNG CUCKOO OUT OF THE NEST AND SCREECHING.

country-side now. I think there is no more harmonious blending than this scarlet and light green. What nosegay or bouquet looks more beautiful? The leaves of the Silver Weed deserve mention now; also the young red leaves of the Maple.

Birds singing:—Skylark, Blackbird ("Thou hast thy matin and thy vesper song!") Greater Whitethroat, Blackcap (several heard to-day uttering their delicious bubbling songs), Chaffinch, Common Wren, Willow Wren, Tree Pipit (one or two seen and heard to-day were singing whilst on a low bush, and on top of a fence, and did not partake of the song-flight), Song Thrush, Nightingale (heard once or twice slightly, the song not nearly so well sustained), Robin.

Birds seen or heard:—Swallow, Rook, House Sparrow, Greenfinch, Yellow Bunting (uttering the so-called song, "A little bit of bread, and no cheese"), Chiff Chaff (the notes to be heard on every side), Jay, Ring Dove (disturbed a good many in the woods, evidently feeding on something on the ground), Cuckoo (getting quite hoarse-like in its cry), Spotted Flycatcher (the pointed beak very marked), Green Woodpecker, Pied Wagtail (uttering its alarm note, and another one seen catching flies in the road near the horse droppings). I also observed a young Wagtail to-day just able to fly. How the peculiar jerky actions are noticeable even in the young fledgling) Starling, Partridge, Swift, House Martin, and Hedge Sparrow, seen or heard, too. Watched a Swallow and Chaffinch fighting; neither of them came to grief.

Found several Yellow Buntings' nests, which contained four eggs in each; also young Chaffinches nearly ready to leave the nest. It is my opinion that birds will often build on a certain side of a hedge. Very often I cannot find a single nest on one side, whilst on the other nests are forthcoming quite frequently. I think it is where they are sheltered from the East winds that they nest the most.

Cuckoo Spit everywhere along the country-side to-day.

In the woods there was an old coat thrown carelessly on the branches by the side of a riding. In one of the pockets I found a nest, but until the eggs are laid (if any), I cannot identify the occupier of this strange nesting site. The nest was composed of dead grasses, coarse outside and finer within. It was quite a deep nest, and I am very anxious to find out the owner. Of this perhaps more anon. We noticed a green-coloured Spider at his web in the woods, also a Toad, and along a hedgerow a Field Mouse perched on the opmost branches feeding on some greenstuff. He did not attempt

to move for some time, and when he did so, he did not scamper, as we expected. Many Orange-tip Butterflies still out. Found a dead Mole by the way-side. Noticed the farmer's sandy Cat up the lane leading to the farmyard; sitting up like a young Tiger, he looked a picture through the glasses, but I am afraid he is a poacher, and many a nest of young birds fall a prey to him. How the narrow lane is straw-strewn, especially the hedges.

Looking through the glass, we see the village nestling in the



NEST AND EGGS OF RING DOVE.

valley, notice the church with its tapered spire pointed heavenwards, and observe a Hare coming down the side of a hedge half a mile away.

A friend who rambled with me to-day remarked that he should hardly have thought it possible for one to write on Natural History week after week without exhausting the subject; but it is an inexhaustible subject, and one never tires of studying Nature in all her various phases. New sights and sounds crop up at every turn, and a week away from the country-side will supply a whole field of information when our rambling day comes round again. Such changes in seven short days we can hardly believe possible, but

Nature graciously supplies us with so many studies that one hardly knows where to begin and where to end describing (feeble though the description may be) those sights and sounds with which we may happen to be brought into contact.

18th.—Thermometer in the garden registered over 100 degrees at 8 a.m. Skylark singing; no stifling atmosphere, no cold winds or driving rain damps the ardour of this blithe bird.

19th.—Very hot. I have not heard the Nightingale singing at night this last few evenings, although I went out specially last night to see if I could hear it. Now that the nesting season is in full swing, the song period has ceased, I suspect. My brother caught a young Jay to-day, and brought me an egg of the Turtle Dove (quite fresh), Blackcap (sitting fairly hard), and two Chiff Chaffs. He tells me that a day or two since he rested under a tree during the heat of the day, and noticed the trouble a Robin was in and he could not understand what the bird was making such a fuss about. The next day he found to his astonishment that he had been laying down with his head over a nest of young Redbreasts.

20th.—Showery, but bright between. Lark and Hedge Sparrow singing I have not heard the latter singing for some considerable time, I think.

Birds also singing:—Willow Wren, Chaffinch, Blackcap, Greater Whitethroat, Robin, Blackbird, Wren, and Three Pipit. Cuckoo calling continuously at 8 p.m.

They were cutting a crop of Sainfoin in this district to-day.

Two eggs of the Great Auk were sold to-day at Mr. Steven's Auction Rooms, King-street, Covent Garden, London. One of them fetched a record price, namely £330 15s.

The following particulars are taken from the "Daily Mail":—

"Even the smaller, and, in comparison, poor specimen which was offered fetched 180 guineas—five guineas more than in 1894, when it brought its lucky owner 175 guineas. The history of this particular egg is interesting. A young fellow attended a furniture sale in Kent, riding to the place on his bicycle. Among some odd fossils he caught sight of two large eggs. Under ordinary circumstances he would have got the lot for about eight shillings, but a man who wanted the fossils started the bidding, and ran him to thirty-six shillings. In the end the eggs, which travelled home tied up in a pocket handkerchief on the back of the bicycle, turned out to be those of the Great Auk, and one of them proving a handsome

specimen fetched, though cracked, 260 guineas in 1894. The increase in prices for these eggs has of late years been very remarkable. In 1856 an egg was sold at Steven's for twenty guineas. Four duplicates belonging to the Royal College of Surgeons averaged £30 apiece in 1865. One of these in 1837 brought £168. A year later another specimen, bought privately for £18 in 1851, was knocked down at King-street, Covent Garden, for £225. In 1892 Sir Vauncey Crewe had to give 300 guineas for an historical specimen, and twice that sum in the same year purchased a stuffed Great Auk and its egg.



BUSY BEES.

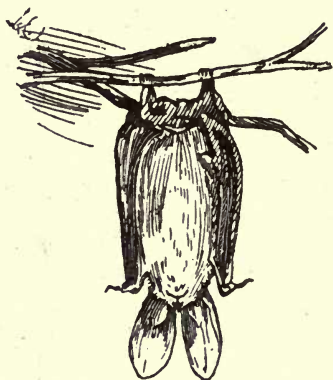
Since then a cracked specimen cost Mr. Middlebrook 300 guineas. Mr. Stevens expressed a hope that the larger egg would remain in this Country and find its way into the British Museum. Its destination is at present uncertain. Mr. Gardner, the Natural History agent, bought it and its fellow, presumably a commission."

21st.—Very showery. Chief flowers in bloom in my garden now:—Pinks, Cornflowers, Antirrhinums, Canterbury Bells, French Marigolds, Roses, and Pansies. I never have had such a show of Pinks; the borders are one mass of white, some thousands of blooms.

22nd.—Fine during day, but heavy showers towards evening. Skylark singing. The rains have brought my Peas along, and the pods are well-formed now. It is only a few days ago since the first flowers were to be seen!

23rd.—Bright and warm. A perfect Summer day. Lark singing, female Chaffinch “weeping” in the garden, Tree Pipit singing.

I saw a bird on the 20th catching insects in a meadow, which puzzles me considerably. I watched it for half an hour, and the whole time it uttered a monotonous sort of note, like a shrill “chiff-chaff, chiff-chaff.” A small coppice was hard by, and I thought



LONG-EARED BAT.

perhaps the bird might have been the Woodlark, but find, on looking into the matter, it was not that species. I had not got my field-glass with me, but the bird came within a few yards of me, and my notes written down at the time are as follows:—Speckled forebreast, light under breast, dark brownish-grey back, no crest on head, light flesh-coloured long legs and feet, about size of Tree Pipit; walked rather than hopped about. My esteemed friend and brother Naturalist, Dr. Greene, gives it as his opinion that it must have been an Ortolan

Bunting. I do not think this likely, as from the bird's actions it seemed to me to have a nest somewhere about, and had the appearance of a Lark or a Pipit. Dr. Greene tells me, by the way, that a good many Ortolan Buntings were traded off last year by a speculator under the name of Auckland Nightingales! If any of my readers know of a bird answering the description given above, I should be glad if they would communicate with me. One never likes to be baffled, and inquiries often elicit a good deal of information other than on the subject inquired into. What is a Meadow Pipit?

24th.—Bright early, dull later; rain towards evening.

Flowers found in bloom to-day:—Field Convulvulus, Bulbous, Wood, and Upright Meadow Crowfoots, Charlock, White and Red Clovers, Hop Trefoil (what a very pretty flower this is when examined, and how fine and large are the flower heads in some places to what they are in others), Yellow Rocket (a stray piece or two

in flower, but mostly gone to seed), Forget-me-not, Sow Thistle Nipplewort, Pink, White, and Bladder Campions, Long-rooted Cat's Ear, Dove's-foot Crane's Bill, Prickly-headed and Scarlet Poppies, Scentless Mayweed (or Corn Feverfew), Heartsease, Shepherd's Purse (the purse-like seeds are very prominent now), Common Mallow, Thyme-leaved Veronica (just a flower or two in bloom), Groundsel (mostly gone off), Lamb's Tongue, Hedge Stachys, Hedge Mustard, Garlic Mustard (nearly finished), Shepherd's Needle (few flower-heads only out now), White Bryony, White Dead Nettle, Field Scabious



YOUNG THRUSHES.

Waiting to be fed.

(commonly called Corn Flowers), Fumitory, Chickweed, Scarlet Pimpernel, Dandelion (not only a flower of Spring, but Summer, too), Dog Rose, Hedge Parsley (mostly seeded now), Germander Speedwell, Goosegrass (the round seeds very prominent), Avens, Lesser Stitchwort, Herb Robert (often called Wild Geranium), Daisy, Tufted Vetch, Small Willow Herb, Woody Nightshade, Bramble, Honeysuckle (will soon be in its beauty), Cow Parsnip, Cinquefoil, Black Bryony (note the various shapes of the leaves in different situations), Greater Stitch-

wort (only a few flowers out, mostly gone off flower), Meadow Vetchling (any quantity in flower), Dogwood, Bird's Foot Trefoll (the railway banks one mass of golden with this flower now), Sainfoin, Oxeye Daisy (what a picturesque bouquet these flowers make when a few of the many various grasses now out are bunched up with them), Wild Strawberry (both in flower and fruit; we pick a few from Nature's own bountiful garden), Hawthorn (the last time this will be included for 1900), Comfrey, Goat's Beard, Bugle, Common Vetch, Broadleaved Plantain (how sweet-smelling the flowers of this latter), Field Rose and Field Thistle. This is, I believe, the largest list of flowers in bloom yet included in my Diary. It is well over sixty species.

The reddish seed-pods of the Sycamore were very noticeable to-day, as also the young leaves of the Nut Hazel and the fine long rows of Potatoes. Rhododendrons still in flower. Avenue of Lime trees very charming now; prickly fruit of Horse Chestnut well formed; bunches of seeds on Ash more prominent than ever; Elder one mass of blossom.

Birds singing:—Skylark, Chaffinch, Greater Whitethroat, Tree Pipit (one can watch and listen to this Pipit at any time with enjoyment and pleasure. It is one of my favourite wild birds; I do so like to watch those curious song-flights, and the bird's entertaining manner, to say nothing of the capivating melodies), Common Wren (very noisy now, this diminutive bird), Hedge Sparrow, Willow Wren (what a delicate little soloist in the woodland choir), Nightingale (not uttering anything like the full song. I heard one start several times, as if the whole song was about to be uttered, but after a few of those long-drawn-out notes the bird ceased singing and I do not expect to hear it sing again this season), Robin, Blackcap (one particular bird to-day sang the first few notes of the Tree Pipit's song; until I spotted the bird, I quite thought it was the Pipit, but seeing is believing), Blackbird.

Birds seen or heard:—Greenfinch, Yellow Bunting (although I listen with pleasure to the voice of this beautiful bird, I do not see how one can include it as a song bird, as some writers do), Song Thrush (seen in a terrible state of excitement, uttering its alarm notes, and as he did so, exposing to view the yellow insides of the beak), House Sparrow (I wonder whether we shall ever have a ramble without having occasion to include this cosmopolitan bird), Pied Wagtail (it is worth noting that on many occasions lately I have come across this bird a great distance from water, and my opinion is that

it does not resort to water so much as in generally supposed; it nests far away from it, of that I have often had ocular demonstration), Chiff Chaff (singing continuously), Cuckoo (not so many heard as previously; June is fast closing, and we shall not hear that welcome call much longer), Rook, Ring Dove, Green Woodpecker (this fine Woodpecker is more often heard than seen), Starling (a small flock seen), Swallow (how pleasing the gentle twitter of this bird. Watched one to-day perched on an Oak by a pond, uttering the pleasant notes. It also twitters on the wing, and I often hear the bird before it is seen). Watched a pair of Greater Whitethroats. They had a nest somewhere, but I searched in vain. They were in a very excited state, and puffed out their delicate little throats as if resenting very much my inquisitiveness. Pheasant, Spotted Flycatcher (flitting to and fro off his watch-perch after the luscious insects); male Chaffinch in the garden; I suspect he was after my Red Currants. The Sparrows are with me very regularly now to what they have been.

Several Butterflies seen out, including the Large Blue. It hardly seems possible that to-day is Midsummer Day. The Summer is speeding away all too fast.

25th.—Rained hard last night, and pouring in torrents this morning. Temperature 50 degrees. Skylark and Hedge Sparrow singing. I hear a Tree Pipit singing every morning near Mill Hill, Middlesex (and at about the same time), as I am in the train travelling to London. Even when in the train we may make ornithological observations. Very heavy thunderstorms throughout the day.

26th.—After the heavy rains the bright sunshine this morning was very welcome.

27th.—I was out just after five o'clock this morning and in the woods. The Skylark and Blackbird were singing loud and long at that hour, and a little later I also heard the Song Thrush, Robin, Willow Wren, Common Wren, Greater Whitethroat, Tree Pipit, Chaffinch, Ring Dove, Swallow, Chiff Chaff, and Cuckoo. It was very damp in the woods, but a beautiful morning for a ramble. Fine to-day. Good deal of sunshine.

28th.—Dull, but fine. On warm evenings now the Glow-worm may be seen, at least its attractive light. Few people, however, know that it is not a worm at all, but the wingless female form of a species of Beetle (*Lampyrus noctiluca*). The pale green light shines from the posterior portion of the female, and this luminosity is supposed to afford the means of attracting the non-luminous male. This is a

very striking illustration of the wondrous workings of Nature, and an instance of the all-absorbing interest which exists in the Natural History world.

29th.—Very close and warm. Greater Whitethroat and Skylark singing.

Looking through a dictionary to-day I came across the following:—"Nightingale: A small bird that sings at night." What a poor definition, to be sure! Why not somewhat as follows:—"A well-known song-bird, which, although it sings during the day-time, is best known because it also sings at night?"

30th.—Several hours' rain early this morning, but looks like clearing up later. June, 1900, has been the wettest June we have experienced for ten years. The total rainfall for the present month was 2·6 inches. June, 1889, was 0·92 inches, 1898, 0·95 inches, and 1897, 1·71 inches. The sunshine record this June has been 142 hours, against an average of 167 for the past fifteen years!

I had a few hours fishing to-day at a delightfully rural spot. Sitting on the fine grass—as soft as the best drawing-room cushion—at the foot of an Ash tree, it is quite enjoyable to watch and listen to the wild life all around. The lake in front of us is light and dark alternately, a striking illustration of light and shade. There is a rather strong breeze, which sends a pleasing ripple across the water. Overhead a Skylark soars and sings, and we have hardly noticed this fact before a Greater Whitethroat rings out that delicate peal of bells from that dainty little white throat. A pair of mute Swans engage our attention; we feed them with some biscuits, but they take advantage of our kindness, and going under the Weeping Willows steal the bread soaking in the water to be used as ground bait! A Wren pours out its carol, and later on we find its nest placed in the very centre of an old cattle shed. Every few moments a few Swallows dart just above the water's edge; how they glide and guide through the boughs and over the tops of the weeds! Ring Doves may be heard cooing noisily in the distance, whilst one of their company takes up his station in one of the trees on the island in the centre of the lake. The voice of the Chiff Chaff comes to us from the right, where there is a coppice, and a Song Thrush is heard in the woods at our back, singing long and loud. Hanging over the water are many Chestnut trees, and the ground to the edge of the pool is carpeted with various delicate flowers and grasses. There is the Broom still in flower; also Rhododendrons, Bird's Foot Trefoil, Lesser Stitchwort, and the Common Orchis. On the opposite bank is an old time-worn boathouse. On the moss-covered slates a

Redbreast appears, and gives us a right royal welcome. Then we hear the plaintive cry of "Cuckoo" quite close at hand; notice the rustic bridge near the far end of the pool; a Pied Wagtail disports himself on our left, and a Chaffinch keeps on rattling up and down the scale. The Redbreast utters now and again its winch-like note, whilst the Hedge Sparrow, in his sober dress of grey and brown, perched on the pliant branches of a Larch Fir, pours out his pretty little warble. We rise and go under the shelter of the trees, in Nature's own arbour. How enjoyable to sit on the rustic seat and watch the Tree Pipit through the opening in the trees. We cannot fish; new sights and sounds are continually cropping up which attract our attention, and we pack up our angling paraphernalia with a light heart; not because of the fish we have secured, but for the rural and sylvan scenes and sweet country associations it has been our privilege to enjoy.

THE EARLY LIFE OF THE YOUNG CUCKOO.

The Cuckoo has always been the subject of considerable controversy and debate, and with all our wonderful strides in the Scientific world, we have as yet failed to solve many of the mysteries which surround its life and habits



No. 1.

YOUNG CUCKOO.

Ejecting young Yellow Bunting, showing Cuckoo well up in the nest.

With all our years of careful and patient observation, we have not yet fathomed the mystery of why the Cuckoo does not build a nest of its own, and as to how many eggs one female lays during a season. True we have by this time exploded the altogether erroneous statement that the bird lays its egg in the nest of the species with which it had decided to entrust its offspring, as it is now proved beyond a doubt that the bird does not lay the egg in the nest, nor does it carry the egg in its claws, but first lay the egg on the ground, and carries it to the selected nest in its mouth!

Although we have accomplished this much, we have not yet proved in any way why the egg is so very small in comparison with the size of the bird; but my friend, Mr. John Craig, to whom I shall shortly refer, has ventured to put forward an explanation of this by stating that he considers it is for the purpose of quick incubation, and to allow the egg to be deposited in bird's nests' which are smaller than the Cuckoo, and also to allow the Cuckoo to carry the egg in her bill to its destination without breaking it!



No. 2.

THE YOUNG CUCKOO.

right at top of nest. The young bird just about to fall over. It will be noticed in this photograph that the Cuckoo has its wings extended to keep the young bird from rolling back into the nest, and the manner in which it has placed its legs in order to get a firm grip is also worth a careful study.

I have entitled these notes "The Early Life of the Young Cuckoo," and do not therefore propose to enlarge on the life and habits of the adult bird, but to proceed to describe a most interesting series of experiences and experiments with some young Cuckoos which Mr. Craig so successfully carried out during the Summer of 1899.

Up to the date of Mr. Craig's valuable observations, considerable doubt existed as to how the young Cuckoo ejected its foster brothers and sisters, or the eggs, out of the nest in which it happened to be

placed. Many theories were expounded, but it seemed that although so many were ready to put their theories and experiences into print, very few indeed had actually witnessed the occurrence. We had had drawings illustrating the young Cuckoo in the act of ejection, but these were not convincing enough to those of a sceptical frame of mind, although those who had actually witnessed the performance readily accepted the drawings as correctly representing the mode of procedure.

Controversy in a certain channel reached fever height in 1899, and my Ayrshire friend at once set to work and secured a wonderful series of photographs *revealing*, as well as illustrating, the young Cuckoo in the very act of ejecting an egg and a young bird, which photographs and experiences have by this time been heard of throughout the Ornithological world.

What Mr. Craig has accomplished is a perfect revelation to many people, the more so when one considers how extremely difficult it is to accomplish such a feat; but owing to his well-directed enthusiasm, patience, care, knowledge of his subject, and whole-heartedness, he has placed bird lovers under a deep obligation to him, and, as Dr. Japp says in his Cuckoo book, "whom all the world will thank for so far decisively setting this matter at rest."

Of this series of Cuckoo photos four are reproduced here and the text underneath each one explains them without further comment, but the notes made by Mr. Craig at the time, read in conjunction with these illustrations, are very valuable, and so extremely interesting that this article would be far from complete without a reference to them.

Before coming to this, however, I should say that these four photographs are by Mr. Peat Millar, of Beith, and the remaining ones of the Cuckoo in this book are by Mr. J. T. Newman. These latter five had nothing whatever to do with the experiments of Mr. Craig and were secured quite independently. They are, however, so very distinct and clear, and so interesting withal, that their reproduction with the other series helps to complete a unique collection of Cuckoo photographs which I believe I am safe in saying has never been presented hitherto.

On June 2nd, 1899, Mr. Craig found a Meadow Pipit's nest containing two Cuckoo's eggs and three Pipit's. One of the latter eggs was broken to ascertain how far incubation was advanced, so that he would know when to return to resume his observations.

A diversity of opinion arises as to whether the two eggs were deposited by the same Cuckoo, but the opinion of Mr. Craig and also the writer is that they were deposited by different Cuckoos. The eggs were different in colour, size, and shape, but it must not be assumed from this that I am of opinion that the same identical bird could not lay eggs quite as different in marking, colour, and shape.



No. 3.

The young culprit who ejected the young birds and eggs is here shewn living in harmony with a young Hedge Sparrow. It will be observed that the young Cuckoo has made considerable progress since the last photograph was taken, and would now be about eleven days old, by which time the desire to eject anything seems to cease. They were found lying snugly ensconced close together in the soft grass at the side of the nest. In that position this photo was taken.

It is rare that the Meadow Pipit lays a clutch of eggs numbering less than four, and this being so, it is reasonable to suppose that the Cuckoo (or Cuckoos) when depositing the eggs had taken away one or more of the Pipits, leaving five in all, [that is including the two Cuckoo's eggs.

On June 6th the eggs were still unhatched, but two days later both the Cuckoos were out of the shells, and one of the Pipit's eggs was found lying outside the nest, and the other remaining Pipit's (as Mr. Craig had already broken one of the eggs only two remained)

was also missing; probably it had been turned out of the nest by one of the young Cuckoos and carried away by the parents.

The two young Cuckoos appeared at first to be quite happy together, but a struggle of extraordinary violence was soon commenced between the two birds. What was apparently the stronger bird of the two got what was evidently the weakest on its back and strained every muscle to hoist it to the top of the nest, while the other was holding on to the nest with its claws for all it was worth.

After a severe struggle they both became exhausted, and went to the bottom of the nest, but after a short respite the battle was again commenced time after time, each bird fighting for dear life.

On visiting the nest the following day (June 9th one of the Cuckoos was found outside the nest. Before putting it in again a young Pipit was secured and put in the nest. The Cuckoo hoisted it again and again on its back, and climbed up the side of the nest backwards with it, but the Pipit always got jammed near the top.

The other Cuckoo was then put in again, and a desperate struggle was witnessed. Sometimes the birds put their bills and heads against the opposite side of the nest when commencing to climb to get more pressure. Several times the top bird tumbled over the head of the other like a rider falling over the head of a horse.

The birds being somewhat exhausted, had a short rest, but they soon became extremely restless and again commenced the struggle.

It was unfortunate that although snapshots were taken of these avine battles they all proved useless.

The following day (June 10th) one of the Cuckoos was again found outside the nest. It was placed back again, when the Cuckoo in possession of the nest began to hoist the other on its back and climbed up the side of the nest backwards and threw it out of the nest, which it had little difficulty in doing, as the one found outside the nest had become so weak through want of food.

After this the weak bird was placed in the nest to give it a chance to recover, and the stronger one was taken away for about an hour. On returning the bird was put back into the nest again, whereupon the weak bird made several attempts to eject its stronger companion, but without effect, as it was far too weak.

It then acted on the defensive by lying in a canted position by keeping the side that was next its opponent downward, one of

its legs being stretched out and its claws against the opposite side of the nest to try and prevent its opponent from getting under it.

The nest was then bolstered up to give the weak bird a chance to recover, but on June 11th the weak bird had disappeared altogether.

The Pipits paid no attention to the young Cuckoo when it was outside the nest, although the bird was frequently sitting on the side of it.



No. 4.

YOUNG CUCKOO

with egg in the hollow of its back in the act of ejecting same.

Thus far no photographs of any value had been secured, although such excellent opportunities had been presented. Not to be outwitted, Mr. Craig procured a young Yellow Bunting, which was admirably suited for his purpose. This he placed on June 12th in the nest beside the sole remaining occupant, i.e., the strongest young Cuckoo! After a few minutes delay the Cuckoo hoisted the Yellow Bunting on its back and climbed up the side of the nest backwards and shot the bird over the nest! The young bird was put back into the nest again and again, but the Cuckoo repeated the operation each time.

Six snapshots were taken at various stages, and the two most important are here reproduced.

By this time the Cuckoo was five or six days old, and the Yellow Bunting was about three or four, and it should be remembered that for the first few days the Cuckoo is quite blind!

The nest was then stretched out (it should be stated that the nest of the Meadow Pipit is built on the ground) to try and save the young Yellow Bunting, but on visiting the nest the following day (June 13th) the bird was found lying dead outside.

The next visit was paid on June 17th, when a young Hedge Sparrow was placed in the nest to see what further performances would take place, but the two birds sat quite contentedly together, and the following day (June 18th) they were still living quite amicably.

On June 19th both birds were progressing very rapidly, and the photo produced shows this in a marked manner. It seems strange that the bird who would not allow anything to be beside it only a few days previously now allowed a young bird to live in harmony with it. When the young Hedge Sparrow was put into the nest it would be about eight days old, and the Cuckoo ten or eleven days.

About the same time as the above-mentioned incidents took place Mr. Craig found another Cuckoo's egg in a Meadow Pipit's nest, and this bird ejected all the four Pipit's eggs, one of them being thrown out when the bird was not twenty-four hours old! One of the photos illustrates the young Cuckoo with the egg in the hollow of its back, and to be appreciated this photo should be looked at from on top, as the nest being built on the ground, it seems from any other position somewhat out of place.

In conclusion, I may state that the young Cuckoo has a depression on the back, which gives a more secure lodgment to the young bird or egg, and the back is broad considering the size of the bird. It makes considerable use of its wings in steadying the bird on its back and to prevent it from rolling back into the nest again, as well as examining, as it were, a bird or an egg in the nest.

JULY.



NEST AND EGGS OF SONG THRUSH BUILT ON THE GROUND.

JULY.

“’Tis the glorious Summer-time,
When the woods are in their prime;
Nature in her bridal dress
Walks the earth to glad and bless;
Fields are verdant, flowers are gay,
Earth around keeps holiday.”

1st.—Warm, but breezy. Flowers found in bloom to-day:—Hawksbeard, Garlic Mustard, Herb Robert, Long-rooted Cat’s Ear, Bulbous, Upright Meadow, and Wood Crowfoots, Bird’s Foot Trefoil, Common Mallow (this is one mass of pink blossom now), Dove’s Foot Crane’s Bill, Scarlet Poppy (these will never look finer than they do now), Oxeye Daisy (what a time these flowers last when placed in water, and what an ornament for the table), Daisy, German Speedwell (what a lengthened flowering period this Speedwell has, to be sure), Privet, Charlock, Red and White Clovers, Scentless Mayweed (coming along very fast now), Heartsease, Hop Trefoil (still in its beauty), Nipplewort, Shepherd’s Purse (nearly finished flowering), Dandelion, White Champion, Lamb’s Tongue, Bladder Champion (going off a good deal), Cinquefoil (this must not be confounded with the Tormentil), Forget-me-not, Cow Parsnip (at its height now), Red Dead Nettle, Goosegrass, Hedge Stachys (lends a nice red colour to the hedgerows now), Avens, Dog Rose, Field Rose (I never remember such a prolific Wild Rose season; it is indeed a grand privilege now to wander down the country lanes, inhaling the sweet aroma, and enjoying the pleasant sights and sounds). Hedge Parsley (mostly gone to seed), Small Willow Herb, Woody Nightshade, Bramble (does not seem to be coming along very fast), Lesser Stitchwort (one mass of delicate white now), Chickweed (seems to have re-started flowering again), Honeysuckle, Field Thistle (found one white bloom to-day), White Bryony, Dogwood, Black Bryony, Yarrow, Meadow Vetchling (still one mass of golden), Wood Loosestrife, Wild Strawberry, Bee Orchis (found quite

a number of flowers of this not very common Orchis. How like a Bee, to be sure, and what an illustration of mimicry in wild life. I have never seen the Fly or the Spider Orchis, but I am told their mimicry is perfect. I was so pleased to find the Bee Orchis to-day, as it is being rapidly exterminated in this district), Field Convolvulus, Broom, Common Vetch, Ground Ivy (a few flower heads found, but not to any extent), Bugle, Frogbit, Broad-leaved Plantain, Spotted Orchis (much commoner than the Bee species previously referred to), Ragged Robin, Hedge Mustard, Centaury, Wood Vetch, Hedge Calamint, Tufted Vetch, Great Mullein (are not the large golden heads of this flower a picture? There are six other species in Britain, but none of them are so common as the present one), Scarlet Pimpernel, Self-heal (old names for this plant are those of Carpenter's Herb, Sicklewort, Hook-heal, and Slough-heal), Agrimony, Small Knapweed, Cow Wheat (found in the woods for the most part; has a very delicate yellowish flower), Silver Weed (how the flowers of this plant, the Cinquefoil, and the Tormentil resemble one another at a glance). I do not think this is at all a bad list; there are over seventy species mentioned above, which is the largest number we have found in flower this season.

Birds singing: Skylark, Hedge Sparrow (singing more now than he has done any time this year), Tree Pipit (does not cease its song through the breeding season, as a good many birds do), Common Wren (a similar remark applies to this diminutive bird as was made in the case of the Hedge Sparrow), Song Thrush, Greater Whitethroat (still uttering as quick and delicious a song as ever he did), Blackbird (how measured is each note of this fascinating songster), Blackcap (we point out the song of this Warbler to the friend who is with us, but he does not like it so well as that of the Nightingale), Redbreast, Willow Wren (good many of these pleasing little songsters heard to-day).

Birds seen or heard:—Swallow (seem to be more plentiful this season than the House Martin), Robin (a young one seen in his spotted livery, quite bob-tailed. Robins at this time of the year are often seen with a nearly featherless head. I am told the reason is that the young Cuckoo when being fed is so voracious and large-mouthed that he often has part of his foster-parent's head in his mouth, too), Chiff Chaff (to be heard on every side), Nightingale (a fine male seen flitting across a green lane, but although I have been out all day not a Nightingale note was to be heard), Jay, Jackdaw, Swift, Starling (getting into flocks now), Ring Dove (one of the most



NEST AND EGGS OF GREATER WHITETHROAT.

plentiful birds in this district), Pheasant (some hundreds of young ones seen being reared in his lordship's park), Canada Goose (half a dozen seen in a semi-domestic state. What a fine Goose this is, especially when seen for the first time), Wild Duck (a good many young ones seen, too), Redstart (watched a pair of these birds through the glasses; the note is something like a shrill "We-tit-tit"; and how beautiful the spreading flame-coloured tail feathers as the male bird alights at the foot of a giant Oak and hangs on Nuthatch like), Sand Martin, Pied Wagtail (uttering his "Which-is-it, which-is-it"), Kestrel (so pleased to see one of these birds, the only Hawk seen during the whole day), and Yellow Bunting.

The Wheat ears are turning yellow, and the bloom is to be seen. The Elder is in very full blossom now. Many Small Meadow-brown and Blue Butterflies out, but the Orange-tip has run its course. We noticed an Oak tree fairly riddled by Woodpeckers and Nuthatches; also the fruit of the Wild Cherry. There were many birds in these latter trees partaking of the luscious fruit. There were about a dozen trees in a fairly large wood, and the birds came from far and near to have their fill. What a treat for them, indeed!

The Ash trees are very beautiful still, the keys very prominent; also those on the Maple.

Of the many hundreds of grasses which are now to be seen, I can only give a passing reference, but what a study these are in themselves. One might devote a lifetime to their study, and then have a deal to learn. The fruit of the Beech is very noticeable now. The Beech mast contains starch, sugar, and oil, and for various cattle and fowls is very fattening. We might do well to use this fruit more than we do. Most of the mast which falls is passed heedlessly by, and never used. In France oil is extracted from it, and used for cooking and lighting purposes.

The various shades of green are still many and various, but there is hardly that diversity of tints so noticeable a few weeks since. Still, there are light and dark greens, greys, and silvers, which deserve notice.

We went through a young Spruce Fir plantation to-day, and what a treat we had. The ground was covered with luscious Wild Strawberries, and did not we have a fill! What an enjoyable feast to be sure, and also the surroundings. Up the grass-grown drive, right through the plantation, is where we found the Bee Orchis blooming and growing in profusion, too; all around was the golden of the Bird's Foot Trefoil, the pink and white of the Field Convolvulus, giant Oxeye Daisies, a good sprinkling of tasty-looking Mushrooms,

and tall grasses. What a beautiful fruit and flower garden in which to ramble!

The Greater Stitchwort has finished flowering.

In a cottager's garden to-day we were particularly struck with the various red flowers therein. We noticed the light red of the Pinks, the slightly darker red of the Thrift, various dark and light red Sweet Williams, some Scarlet Geraniums, Sweet Peas and Antirrhinums, what I took to be Orpine, and a very flaring and flower I could not identify. I never saw such a picture of red bloom before. We partook of lunch to-day in a little hostelry called The Chequers. The present superintendent of the Zoological Gardens resided here not a great while since, and we noticed in the glass cases on the walls a Landrail, a pied Pheasant, a Magpie, and some Starlings. The country children were doing quite a trade hereabouts by selling bunches of flowers to the cyclists who here congregate during the Summer months. The view from the massive stone bridge in his lordship's park surpasses description. Below us the wide, placid stream. Throwing in a piece of bread, it was immediately attacked by Roach, Rudd, Dace, Carp, Perch, Tench, and other fish. The river here has not been fished for over seven years, and the fish we saw to-day were nothing less than several ounces in weight, whilst many would have turned the scale at some pounds. We remember our fishing excursions here in the past when a more genial owner than the present one resided at the imposing red-brick house on the right bank, behind those sweet-foliaged trees. Just on the brink of the water-fall, many yards wide, half a dozen Canada Geese were to be seen, and lower down the stream a good many Wild Ducks. We never saw such dark red Wild Roses as those seen to-day in this earthly paradise. We have a short chat with the policeman stationed on the bridge to pass people along, and then proceed past the house and on through a veritable sea of bracken. We hear the love song of the Grasshopper, notice that the berries of the Hawthorn are getting quite red, and point out to our friend who accompanies us how it is possible to find one's way out of a wood. That is, by noting that Moss grows for the most part and thickest on the North side. One of the woods we rambled through to-day was only cut down three years ago. What rapid progress it has made in three short years, to be sure. The last notes in our Note Book refer to the keys on the Hornbeam, and the quietude which exists on a Sunday evening at a country railway station.

2nd.—Showery, but very warm. We have had enough rain, I

think, although when digging in the garden to-day about a foot or so down it was quite dry. We want some nice bright weather now for a week or two.

3rd.—Bright and warm, with some heavy showers. Skylark and Hedge Sparrow singing. The Rose trees in the garden are throwing some splendid blooms. The House Sparrows are still nesting in my neighbour's roof. The reds and browns of the grasses very noticeable now.

Taking stock of a bird's nest to-day reminded me of that beautiful verse by Hardis, as follows:—

"A bird's nest. Mark it well, within, without.
No tool had he that wrought, no knife to cut,
No nail to fix, no bodkin to insert,
No glue to join; his little beak was all.
And yet how neatly finish'd! What nice hand,
With every implement and means of art,
And twenty years' apprenticeship to boot,
Could make me such another?"

4th.—Lovely bright morning, but we were not at all sure that the weather would hold. For a wonder, it has done so; it has been fine all day. The flowers of the Pinks are dying off in the garden, but the Stocks and Phloxes and Nasturtiums are taking their place rapidly. Hedge Sparrow singing within sound of my door.

5th.—Dull, but fine and warm. The flower of the Portugal Laurel is out. How it smells, and how delicate the ochre centre and the spikes. The Rabbits come right out into the fields to nibble at the roots of the Docks and Dandelions; they are very fond of these. The Pink Campion is still flowering freely, but the Wild Arum has gone to seed. The bright green bunches of seeds look very curious in the woods, the leaves having been shed. Heard two Nightingales uttering what I took to be an alarm note, but deliciously bubbling and sweet.

A dull, cloudy fore-evening, then about eight o'clock a faint orange light was thrown up from the West towards the trees in the East. This light flickered for a while, finally bursting into a glorious copper colour. It just caught the tops of the trees in the park, where we happened to be strolling, and the effect was indeed charming and magnificent, the more so because of the contrast between the black of one moment and the shimmering gold of the next. Later on, towards the North and North-west, there were delicate patches of light pearl grey floating amongst dark grey.

6th.—Bright and warm. Skylark and Wren singing. Sweet Williams blooming freely in the garden.

7th.—Fitful gleams of sunshine; cold breezes. Skylark, Willow Wren, and Blackcap singing.

8th.—Beautiful bright day. 100 degrees at 8 a.m.

Flowers found in bloom to-day:—Bramble, Bush Vetch, Herb Robert, Nipplewort, Hedge Parsley, Red Campion, Garlic Mustard (will soon be included for the last time this year), Wood Crowfoot, Avens, Furze (nearly finished flowering, mostly gone to seed), Bird's Foot Trefoil, Daisy, Dog Rose, Field Rose, Cinquefoil Hedge Stachys, White Clover, Dove's-foot Crane's Bill, Yarrow, Scentless Mayweed (at its height now), Prickly-headed Poppy, Fumitory, Field Thistle, Shepherd's Purse, Charlock, Hawksbeard, Chickweed Dandelion, Sow Thistle, Hop Trefoil, Forget-me-not, Long-rooted Cat's Ear, Red Clover, Upright Meadow, and Bulbous Crowfoots, Field Convolvulus, Common Mallow, Cow Parsnip, White Campion, Hedge Mustard, White Dead Nettle, Groundsel, Bladder Campion (nearly finished), Small Knapweed, Germander Speedwell, Blue Sherardia, Heartsease, Lamb's Tongue, White Bryony (one mass on the hedgerows now), Goosegrass, Woody Nightshade, Self Heal, Honeysuckle, Lesser Stitchwort, Field, Scabious, Wild Thyme, Agrimony (is not the perfume of this flower delicious?) Dogwood, Meadow Vetchling, Tufted Vetch, Purple Medick, Scarlet Pimpernel, Sainfoin, Wild Strawberry, Small Willow Herb, Water Figwort, Spotted Orchis, Enchanter's Nightshade, Foxglove, Black Bryony (mostly seeded now, the green berries hanging in large clusters), Ragged Robin, Oxeye Daisy, Marsh Mallow, Hedge Calamint, Musk Mallow, Perforated St. John's Wort, Yellow Bedstraw, Black Horehound, Broad-leaved Plantain, Motherwort, Hedge Bedstraw, Milkwort.

Birds singing:—Skylark, Song Thrush (one heard to-day was a young one, probably hatched in the early Spring of this year), Blackcap (uttering part of the song of the Chaffinch perfectly), Greater Whitethroat (mostly sings as it flies or hovers), Common Wren (in full song now), Tree Pipit (very silent to what it has been; only one heard in song to-day).

Birds seen or heard:—Swallow; Waxwing (one seen at Radlett Railway Station. It was shot by the Station Master in November, 1895, out of a flock of Fieldfares, which were feeding on the berries of a Mountain Ash tree in the station yard), House Sparrow (seen in flocks on the waste ground feeding on obnoxious weed seeds),

Chaffinch (female heard, but the song of the male has ceased for the time being), Rook, Rellow Bunting, Ring Dove (a flock of over a hundred passed over; in the woods one could hear their love song, "Don't-scold-so-Suky!") Turtle Dove, Spotted Flycatcher (watched with interest one of these birds catching insects; what turns and twistings it resorts to when engaged in such operations; once or twice it made its watch-tower a board on which a notice was posted, "All persons trespassing will be prosecuted." What liberties the bird was taking, to be sure!) Robin (uttering its winch-like note), Chiff Chaff (in incessant voice), Great Tit, Blackbird, Kestrel (what a pleasure to see one of these beautiful Hawks), Pheasant, Partridge, Jay, Swift, Starling (many flocks passing over at sunset to roost in the big woods), Lapwing (a flock of thirty seen).

The Elder is still one mass of blossom. Young Wasp seen out to-day for the first time. Laburnum is all seeded now. Acorns are well formed. Cuckoo and Nightingale both silent now. Several Small White Butterflies out on the wing. Snowberry is in flower: how delicate the mauve and white of the acres of Potatoes, and how straight the rows; the sight is a most pleasant one, and we could wish that farmers cultivated them to greater extent. Lime in flower. The seeds of the Wild Hyacinths very prominent in the woods. We noticed to-day the Silver Birch; it is one of the trees which grows farthest North. The large cones on the Spruce Fir very noticeable now. Portugal Laurel is in flower. The Toadflax will soon be included in our flower list; it is nearly bursting.

9th—Watched the first break of dawn in the East at 3 a.m. How striking to watch the sun slowly rising, and the gradual opening ceremony of another day! Bright and warm. Hedge Sparrow and Skylark singing. Beautiful clear moonlight night.

Our list of July Butterflies is as follows :—Swallow-tail, Large Garden White, Small Garden White, Green-veined White, Bath White Wood White, Brimstone, Queen of Spain Fritillary (a rarity), Dark Green Fritillary, High Brown Fritillary, Silver-washed Fritillary, Heath Fritillary, Comma, Large Tortoiseshell, Small Tortoiseshell, Peacock White Admiral, Purple Emperor, Marbled White, Mountain Ringlet, Northern Brown, Speckled Wood, Grayling, Meadow Brown, Ringlet or Wood Ringlet, Large Heath, Marsh Ringlet, Small Heath, Brown Hairstreak, White-letter Hairstreak, Dark Hairstreak, Purple Hairstreak, Green Hairstreak, Small Copper, Common Blue, Silver-studded Blue, Chalk-hill Blue, Holly Blue, Mazarine Blue, Bedford Blue, Large Blue, Grizzled Skipper, Small Skipper, New Small

Skipper, Lulworth Skipper (by no means common), Large Skipper, Silver-spotted Skipper.

10th.—Very hot; 106 degrees at 8 a.m. The House Sparrows come into the garden for their breakfast every morning now.

11th.—Lovely Summer weather now. Brilliant sunshine tempered with soft breezes. Skylark, Wren, and Hedge Sparrow singing. Splendid show of White Lilies in the garden; the aroma most beautiful, and flowers like wax. The salient features of the flowers on the railway banks now are the white of the Cow Parsnip, Yarrow, and Oxeye Daisies, the mauve of the Field Scabious, the scarlet of the Poppy, and the yellow of the Hawksbeard and Long rooted Cat's Ear.

12th.—Still scorching hot. Splendid haymaking weather. Picked Peas in the garden, and dug Potatoes. The smell of the new mown Hay most delicious, especially towards evening.

13th.—Another scorcher. Still over 100 degrees at 8 a.m. The Hedge Sparrow is in continuous song now, and the Lark sings on. I am never at home without a Lark can be heard singing right over my house. How few residents in the district take notice of the little jewel suspended in mid-air, but I for one worship the sweet-voiced minstrel.

A specimen of the American Bittern captured at Long Sutton, Somersetshire, during the Winter of 1898 has just been brought to my notice. Only a few examples of this interesting bird have been obtained in this country.

In size the now extinct British breeding Bittern and the American species differ very little, a remark which also applies to the general structure and habits.

This bird has a variety of names, and amongst others may be mentioned those of Marsh Hen, Stake-driver, Poke, Freckled Heron, Bog Bull, Night Hen, Booming Bittern, and Look-up.

The range of the bird is temperate North America, and it usually nests in Virginia, and winters from that State Southwards to the West Indies. With its yellow bill, rather stout and sharply-pointed, small rounded tail, and long olive-coloured legs, the bird presents an altogether attractive appearance. The upper parts are freckled with shades of brown, blackish, buff, and whitish; it is slate-coloured on the top of head and back of neck, with a wash of yellow brown; there is a black streak on sides of neck, the chin and throat are white, with a few streaks of brown; underneath pale buff pre-

dominates, with brown stripes. The flatness of the head is well worth mentioning.

When lighted upon suddenly, this bird throws itself into all manner of curious and grotesque attitudes. It has been known to assume the appearance of a patch of rushes, or other aquatic herbage, at times looking more like a heap of rubbish than a living bird; but when the intruder approaches too near to be pleasant, the bird ruffles its plumage, extends its wings, gives a violent slap from the strong wing and a thrust from the very sharp and powerful beak, and the too venturesome observer may have to suffer rather acutely for his inquisitiveness. It has been known to stab to the death a little water spaniel, whose master had allowed the dog to approach too close to the bird. Yet I am given to understand that the "Common" Bittern of England, now no more, when suddenly approached gave itself up as lost, and showed no fight. This information is given to me by a trusty friend, who in years gone by has come across the bird in the Southern counties.

It is said that the young Bitterns are very good eating.

The long legs and sharp bill aids the bird considerably in procuring its food which consists of Frogs, Lizards, Snakes, large-winged Insects, Meadow Mice, &c. The "booming" of the American Bittern is apparently very similar to that of what was once our own "Bull of the Bog."

14th.—Very hot, brilliant sunshine; nice breezes. Hardly so oppressive as yesterday. Saw a Cuckoo to-day. but I have not heard it singing this month. However, a keeper's wife tells me she heard one calling up to Saturday, the 7th inst. I have not often heard it uttering any notes in July, my latest date being July 2nd.

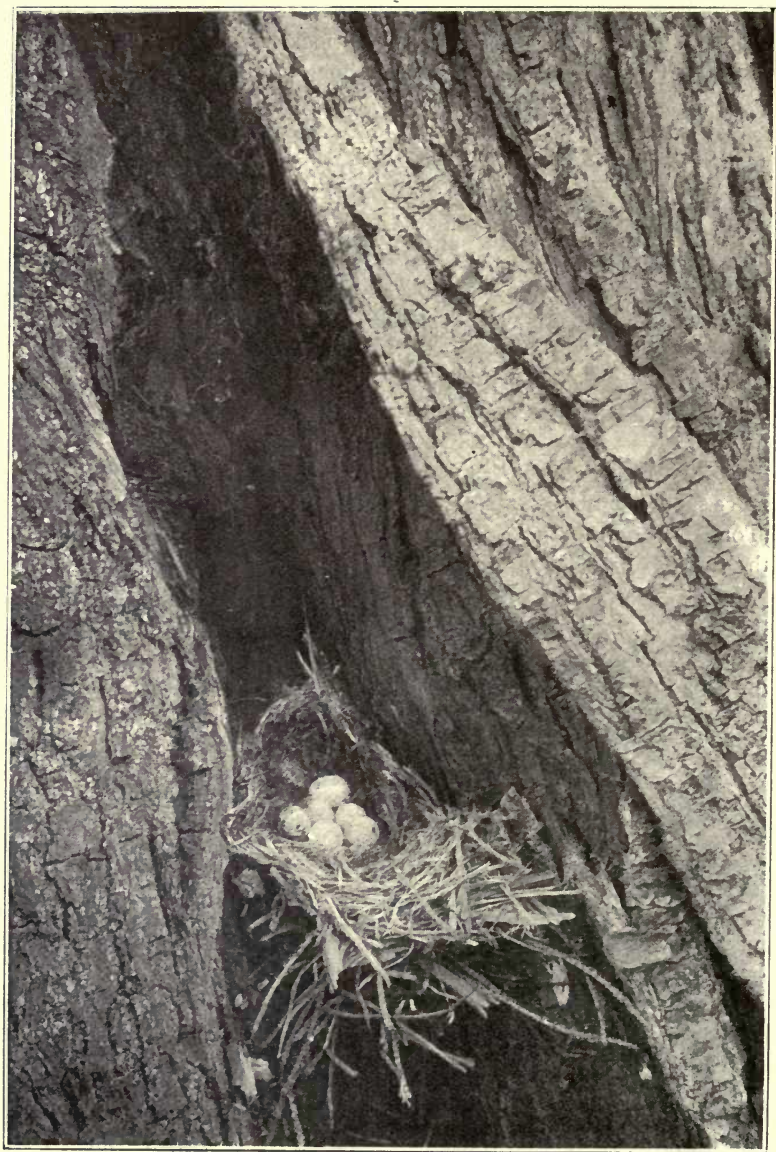
15th.—Very hot, and heat almost unbearable. So hot that the birds have all day long kept in the shade of the woods, and hardly uttered a note. It seems to have affected all Nature. Hardly a leaf moved; a few Rabbits scampered through the bracken in a listless sort of way, but the Dog's Mercury was withering quite fast at mid-day. We walked over thirteen miles to and from our destination to-day, but on reaching our friend the keeper's cottage it was deemed advisable to rest. This we did, so that our observations for to-day refer only to what we saw and heard on the way, and owing to the heat those notes are somewhat restricted, especially so as we rely on the seventh day for most of our notes.

Flowers blooming: —Toadflax, Field Scabious, Oxeye Daisy,

Bird's Foot Trefoil, Cow Parsnip, Hawksbeard, Sow Thistle, Yarrow (in its prime now; some flower heads are snow white, others quite pinkish in colour), Scarlet Poppy, Charlock, Nipplewort, Field Thistle, Fumitory, Scentless Mayweed, Shepherd's Purse (keeps lingering along in flower, and we cannot very well leave it out of our list), Groundsel (seems to be coming on again for the second time), Dandelion. Broad-leaved Plantain, Germander Speedwell, Long-rooted Cat's Ear, White Campion, Cinquefoil, Common Mallow, Field Convolvulus (like so many pink and white stars as seen on the brown ground), Yellow Bedstraw, Perforated St. John's Wort, Small Knapweed (one mass of bloom now), Milkwort, Agrimony, Hedge Bedstraw, Chickweed, Bulbous and Upright Meadow Crowfoots, Daisy, Creeping Thistle, Bramble, Enchanter's Nightshade, Wood Loosestrife (what a delicate golden flower this is), Pink Campion, Forget-me-not, Small Willow Herb, Scarlet Pimpernel, Prickly-headed Poppy, Self Heal, Centaury (found a great quantity of this very pretty wild flower growing on some waste ground), Avens, Privet, Honeysuckle, Dove's-foot Crane's Bill, Hedge Calamint, Hedge Mustard, Lamb's (Tongue, Great Mullein, White Bryony, Woody Nightshade, Harebell the first I have seen in flower this year), Hairy St. John's Wort, Viper's Bugloss (blue flowers are by no means common in our flora, therefore this one is very welcome), Wood Sage, Ragwort (found two waste fields one mass of golden from this flower. The fields in question are not cultivated, and this flower has now got quite a hold; but the sight was worth seeing because of its gorgeousness and its extent). After all, I think this a fairly good list, but although we went through woods and by hedgerows, we did not see a single Wild Rose in flower. I can hardly think they have finished blooming so quickly!

Birds singing:—The Skylark was the sole chorister in Nature's choir to-day, if we except a solitary Sedge Warbler, singing slightly in the reeds by the canal towards evening, and a Song Thrush at the same hour. Cold and heat do not affect this blithe bird, and that is why he is such a favourite of mine. There, in the broiling sun, the bird could be seen towering up towards the cloudless sky, singing sweet and delicious strains. It is the quietest day I have spent in bird-land since early Spring.

Birds seen or heard:—House Sparrow (still busy nesting), Robin (uttering its winch-like note), Swift, House Martin, Blackbird, Rook (a very large flock seen on the ploughed lands), Swallow, Ring Dove, Pied Wagtail, Spotted Flycatcher, Great Titmouse (busy uttering all



NEST AND EGGS OF SPOTTED FLYCATCHER.

manner of notes in the woods), Jackdaw, Moorhen (croo-ing among the Willows and Reeds).

The Oats are heading up very strongly now, and one particular field seen to-day was quite yellow. The corn is changing from green to yellow. The haymakers have had splendid weather this last fortnight, but labour is scarce, I hear, and as much as £5 per week is being offered.

We visited a Barley field to-day. The last time we were there the seed was being sown. What a change now! Also in the woods, where all was bare when we were in this neighbourhood in February and March, it is now in fairest verdure clad: quite a transformation scene.

The *Eschscholtzia* in the garden is in bloom; are not the golden flowers gorgeous, and is not the soft green foliage a perfect contrast, and yet harmonious!

To-day is St. Swithin's; country people say on this day, "I wonder if it will christen the Apples?"

The mass of Scarlet Poppies on the railway banks and in the cornfields this Summer is a picture. I have never before seen such a mass of scarlet. What artist could do justice to such a scene? The silver sheen on the Willows by the gin-bright water very noticeable. Long-song of the Grasshopper heard. Several Large White and Meadow-brown Butterflies out. The Lime in flower, and the aroma to-day was delicious. The monotone to be heard right through the avenues of these trees was curious and pleasing; of course, it was the Bees in the blossoms. The Cedar also smells sweetly. The Nuts are ripening quickly under the hot July sunshine. The Sheep get up lazily to allow us to pass them. The Red Deer and Fawns in his lordship's park are well worth our attention. The cattle standing in the Trout stream just by the old mill-house and the waterfall is a very restful scene; here it is shaded. It is not refreshing to get under the shelter of the trees from out of the sun-scorched paths? The Elder is going off flower. Passed a pleasant half-hour in and around an old farmhouse to-day. The Cherries in the orchard looked very tempting. In one day the bird scarer shot nearly one hundred and fifty blackbirds and Thrushes, and on another occasion over eighty. Can nothing be done to put a stop to this wholesale slaughter? A fine young Jackdaw was trying to attract our attention by "jacking," and the good lady, with spotless skin and freckled face, gave him a tasty bit. We also noticed a fine Ring Dove, which had been caged five years. He was in splendid fettle, but blind in

one eye; at least one was black and the other yellow. Several Geese keep a safe distance from us, and we notice particularly a fine young Game cock. Cannot the former tear up the grass with those bills of theirs? Are there not some good stout beams in an old farmhouse? Inside we noticed a stuffed Kingfisher, Sparrow Hawk, and Kestrel, a couple of curious domestic Pigeons, whilst a fine-voiced Linnet was singing. The old lady says it mocks every wild bird it can hear! The farmer showed us with pride what he called a "pot" of "Shamrock," but it was Wood Sorrel, which grows within a few yards of his door!



YOUNG SWALLOWS.

The Traveller's Joy is heading up very prominently now; it will soon be out in flower. The keeper tells me he has seen and heard many pairs of Nightjars this Summer, and that a Sparrow Hawk is continually robbing him of his young Pheasants. As many as five were taken before breakfast this morning from the coops where they are being reared.

I do not know whether it is generally known that when emasculation takes place in a Deer its antlers fall off, and it then associates with the Does; also that when the generative organs of the female Pheasant go wrong she assumes the garb of the male

to some extent. These birds are often called hybrids, but the keeper assures us they are nothing of the kind.

16th.—Still very hot, but morning opened somewhat dull; afterwards it was blistering hot, the hottest day that we have had this Summer, over 90 degrees in the shade, over 135 degrees in the sun! It is said to be the hottest July day we have had for over forty years.

17th.—115 degrees in the sun at 8 a.m. Skylark singing. It is now nearly a fortnight since we had any rain.

They are crying out in France because of the scarcity of small birds and the redundancy of insect life. It is so bad that the Minister of Agriculture has issued a circular to the Prefects on the matter, asking for their reports and suggestions for remedying the evil. At the time of the annual migration in the South of France it is stated that there are "positive hecatombs of birds" Swifts still careering round my house towards evening.

18th.—Still broiling hot. Swallow and House Martins seen. Skylark singing joyously. Following flowers blooming in the garden: *Eschscholtzia*, *Lobelia*, French Marigolds, Phlox, Stocks, Nasturtiums, Pinks, Antirrhinums, White Lilies, Pansies, Roses, Cornflowers, Sweet Peas, Mignonette, Sweet Williams, and Canterbury Bells. The Flocks will soon be out, also Garden Mallows, Carnations, and Asters. White Runner Beans in flower.

Skylark soaring at 8.45 p.m.

19th.—112 degrees in the sun at 8 a.m. Since yesterday my Garden Mallows have opened out into a blaze of red, and the Carnations are bursting. Hedge Sparrow singing.

20th.—Still broiling hot. Very slight showers. Good deal of lightning playing about in the East towards evening. Skylark singing.

21st.—Dull and threatening. A short, sharp shower in early morning, but nothing to speak of. Whilst I was playing cricket to-day forty or fifty Jackdaws were hovering and cackling overhead.

22nd.—Dull most of day, but very oppressive. Seemed as if a storm was brewing, but is missed us.

Flowers found in bloom:—Scentless Mayweed, Charlock, Hop Trefoil, Dandelion, Bulbous Crowfoot, White Clover, Field Thistle, Nipplewort (at its height now), Scarlet Poppy, Sow Thistle, Field Convolvulus, Small Knapweed, Yarrow, Cow Parsnip, Bramble, White Dead Nettle (seems to have started flowering again), Hedge Parsley, Herb Robert, Harebell, Bird's-foot Trefoil, Pink Campion, Dove's-foot

Crane's Bill, Common Mallow, Red Clover, Cinquefoil, Field Scabious, Ragwort, Hedge Stachys, Hedge Bedstraw, Hedge Calamint, Daisy, Meadow Vetchling, Lesser Stitchwort, Yellow Bedstraw, Field Rose (the Dog Rose has gone right off flower now, and only this one is now blooming), Agrimony, Self Heal, Scarlet Pimpernel, Wood Crow-foot, Enchanter's Nightshade (one mass of white and red in the woods now; closely examined, this is a very delicate and pretty flower, but I can hardly understand why it should have been given the name of Enchanter's Nightshade, as I fail to see anything very enchanting about it); Small Willow Herb, Forget-me-not, Wild Strawberry (in fruit and flower), Chickweed, White Bryony (what an ornament to the country side the trailing stems of this plant), Germander, Speedwell, Tufted Vetch, Avens, Perforated St. John's Wort, Foxglove (going off a good deal; what attractive seed-shaped pods this has!) Honeysuckle (still lingering on), Long-rooted Cat's Ear, Lamb's Tongue, Hedge Mustard, Fumitory, Shepherd's Purse (mostly finished flowering now), Groundsel, Bladder Campion, Wild Thyme, Sainfoin, Greater Willow Herb, Woody Nightshade, Purple Medick, Musk Mallow, Yellow Meliot, Spear Plume Thistle, Betony, Moneywort (commonly called Creeping Jenny; this is the first time I have found this growing wild, and to-day I found it in abundance in a wood I traverse nearly every week; how delicate the golden flowers and the bright green leaves), Rest Harrow (this is a very pretty flower when carefully examined), Wood Sage, and Borage (what a fine blue flower this throws!)

I think this is our largest list of Wild Flowers in bloom so far!

Birds singing:—The Skylark as usual was in incessant song; a few brown Wrens also made the woods ring with their sweet notes to-day, but here finishes the list of song birds which are now singing. Mention must be made, however, of a Blackcap which I heard towards evening uttering in a very subdued voice all manner of notes. Amongst them I could distinguish the "jug, jug, jug," of the Nightingale, the perfect song of the Chaffinch, the scolding note of the Greater Whitethroat, the "spink, spink," and the chuckle of the Blackbird. I listened with interest and amusement to this English mocking bird. The ordinary passer-by would not have heard the bird, but my eyes and ears being always alert when I am out naturalising, I did not fail to hear the concert this little musician was having all to himself. Why the bird should have uttered his song in such a subdued manner I cannot say, but it was remarkable because of the many birds it imitated and the perfect mimicry thereof. It is a long while since I have heard one bird show off to such

perfection the wonderful imitative faculties these feathered creatures possess

Birds seen or heard:—Hedge Sparrow, House Sparrow, Yellow Bunting (noisy the whole day long), Ring Dove, Chiff Chaff, Chaffinch (pinking), Blackbird. Lapwing, Great Tit (very noisy; apparently parent birds and several young ones in tops of tall Firs), Nuthatch (this bird, too, seemed as if it had young about), Jackdaw, Robin, Coal Tit, Spotted Flycatcher, Long-tailed Tit (we have had quite a day among the Titmice), Lesser Whitethroat (on the telegraph wires, with a grub in its beak), Starling (in flocks towards evening), Swift, Rook, Partridge, Turtle Dove, and Bullfinch.

Found nest of Bullfinch built on pliant branches of Fir; it was the usual Bullfinch nest inside, but constructed outside of Fir twigs, making an exceptionally large nest. There was one egg in the nest, and two or three youngsters. Also found to-day Turtle Dove's nest, containing two eggs, built in limb of tree.

Many Green Caterpillars in Cabbages in garden. The corn is quite brown. I never remember such a rapid transformation scene. The Walnuts are coming along very quickly, and there seems a good crop. Came across a keeper's gibbet in the woods, and noticed on it several Jays: (he says he has killed all in the wood except one, but I know different), Stoats, Weasels, Cats, Moles, and Hedgehogs.



HEDGEHOG.

On my remonstrating with him for slaughtering the Moles and Hedgehogs, he says the former burrow under the Pheasant's nests, thus allowing the eggs to fall in the ground, and the latter are very fond of rummaging about in the Pheasant's nests and smashing the eggs. Writing of Hedgehogs reminds me that I came across one alive in the woods to-day and brought it home. Unless one has had experience with these extraordinary animals, one can hardly believe how curious and timid they are. The head is quite hoglike in character, and to see them walk or run is very peculiar, as they are so ungainly. Their mouth seems right underneath the jaw, but my "Moses" will not yet allow me to observe him as closely as I should

like, and before I have the chance to do so he will probably have made good his escape. So soon as he observes you, doh goes his head, and before one has time to realise what has happened he is curled up, and no power on earth can shift him. At night it strikes me that he runs about the garden, but during the day he sleeps the sleep of the righteous. The black seeds of the Wild Hyacinth are very prominent in the woods now; also in the marshy situations the very tall Thistles and Grasses cannot escape attention. The Helleborine is heading up, and in a few days should be in flower. The Snowberry is still in flower, and the leaves of the Silver Weed are very noticeable. Lime still in flower. Rhododendrons in flower even now. Keys on the Maple still prominent. Saw a Stoat run across the road not a hundred yards from the keeper's gibbet!

A great many Moths about, probably owing to the dry weather. The Humming-bird Hawk Moth is plentiful again this Summer. Green berries of the Holly to be seen. The Nuts are very noticeable now, and the Oats look quite ripe. The harvest is at hand.

23rd.—Very hot and oppressive Harvest started in this district to-day, many acres of Oats being cut and shocked by evening.

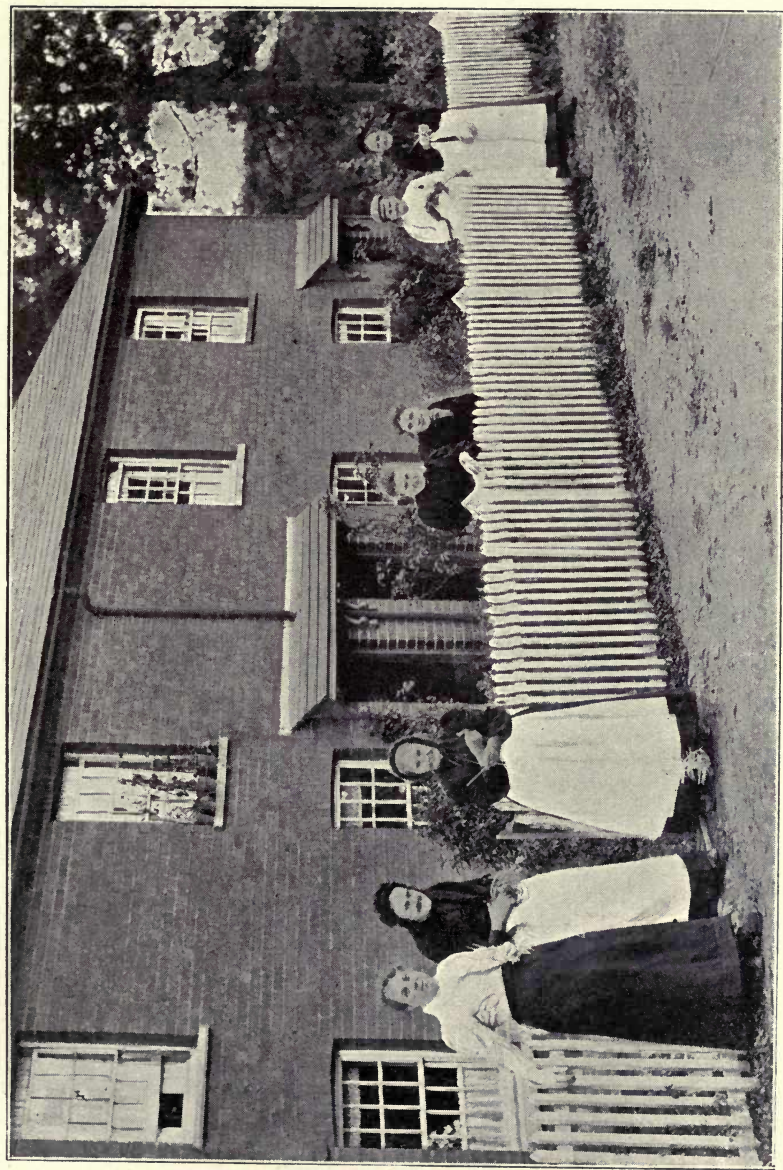
24th.—114 degrees in the sun at 8 a.m. Hedge Sparrow singing.

25th.—116 degrees in the sun at 8 a.m. Great Tit appeared on the garden fence. House Sparrows very noisy.

26th.—Nice breezes, but still well over 100 degrees in the sun. Skylark singing. We want rain very badly now.

27th.—Bright and warm, but not nearly so hot and oppressive as it has been. Skylark singing. The golden of the Corn and the lighter straw colour of the Oats very prominent now. Sunflowers and Carnations blooming in the garden. Swifts seen. I hunted high and low for my Hedgehog to-day, but he must have made good his escape! They have a knack of getting out of a garden, even if a high brick wall is situated all round. I hope he may turn up again, but for the present at least we mourn his loss.

The long-looked-for storm arrived this afternoon. Such heavy thunder and vivid lightning I do not remember before. The welcome rain descended and gave quite a refreshing Spring-like appearance to the thirsty earth, for it is over three weeks since we had any rain to speak of. The storm continued for some hours, but in the midst of it all a courageous Lark was suspended in mid-air, and a cheery Hedge Sparrow uttered a song of praise.



VILLAGE GOSSIP OR PLAITING AT THE COTTAGE DOOR.

28th.—Cooler, temperature down to 40 degrees in the shade, about 70 degrees in the sun, very hard rains during last night. Swallow and Swift seen, also House Martin, Lapwing, Jackdaw, and Yellow Bunting.

The following paragraph is taken from a local paper:—

"There is on exhibition in the window of a Liverpool Taxidermist a splendid specimen of the Golden Eagle, recently killed at Zenula Forest, Glencannich, Beaulieu, N.B. The bird measures seven feet two inches from tip to tip of the wings when expanded, and three feet two inches from beak to tail. It had built its eyrie in a small cave on the face of a high cliff, and a keeper, having noted the spot, watched until the return of the female bird one evening, and having fastened a rope round his waist and secured it round the stump of a tree, descended as soon as darkness had set in to the nest, situated many feet below. He was immediately attacked by the Eagle, but after a short struggle succeeded in breaking its wing with a cudgel. He then waited until daylight, when he destroyed the bird, and took the only Eaglet from the nest, and re-ascended the face of the cliff"

All the harm I wish that "keeper" is that he had never ascended the cliff again!



HUMMING BIRD HAWK MOTH

29th.—Bright morning, afterwards dull; thundery and showery. Flowers found in bloom:—Water Ragwort, Ragged Robin, Upright Meadow Crowfoot, Yarrow, Bird's-foot Trefoil, Marsh Thistle, White Clover, Long-rooted Cat's Ear, Charlock, Cow Parsnip, Field Convolvulus, Hedge Parsley, Bladder Campion, Bramble, Sow Thistle, Scarlet Poppy, Agrimony (mostly seeded now; how prominent the

pliant stems and seed-pods along the hedgerows at this season), Small Knapweed, Yellow Bedstraw, Meadow Vetchling, Musk Mallow, Hedge Calamint, Perforated St. John's Wort, Traveller's Joy (we have been watching this for weeks past, and now that it is out in flower we feel especially gratified. Some people call it Daddy's Beard and White Clematis), White Campion, Field Scabious, White Bryony (does not this last in flower a long time as compared with the Black

Bryony), Scentless Mayweed, Betony, Common Mallow, Nipplewort, Bulbous Crowfoot, Dandelion, Hedge Mustard (nearly all gone to seed), Harebell, Wild Thyme, Hedge Bedstraw, Groundsel, Herb Robert, Lesser Stitchwort (has a very lengthened flowering period apparently), Daisy, Hedge Stachys (going off rapidly), Woody Nightshade, Self Heal, Avens, Cinquefoil, Centaury, Germander Speedwell, Lamb's Tongue, Rest Harrow, Red Clover, Corn Sow Thistle, Sainfoin, Burdock (first time of its inclusion in our list), Goosegrass (mostly seeded), Ragwort, Scarlet Pimpernel, Enchanter's Nightshade, Small Willow Herb, Moneywort, Helleborine, Purple Medick, Honeysuckle, Figwort (going rapidly off flower), Parsnip, Corn Mint, Wild Carrot (called Birds Nests by many country people because of the nest-like shape assumed when going to and in seed), Field Thistle, Mugwort, and Black Horehound.



STOAT.

Birds singing:—Skylark (not so much as it has done), Song Thrush (a solitary bird heard singing a very lonesome song), Hedge Sparrow (supplies quite a lively little strain now that most of the songsters are silent), and Common Wren.



AN OLD-FASHIONED HERTFORDSHIRE GARDEN.

Birds seen or heard:—Swallow (several little companies congregating, surely very early), Rook, House Sparrow (small flocks on waste ground after weed seeds), Swift (never out of our sight this morning whilst we were in the open country), Turtle Dove (how graceful the flight of this bird as it glides through the woodland glade), Blackbird, Robin, Yellow Bunting (one of the noisiest birds by the country side just now), Chiff Chaff, Chaffinch, Coal Titmouse, Spotted Flycatcher (on an old Scotch Fir uttering its notes of u-tick, u-tick, tick, &c.), Greenfinch (how is it this bird is so seldom included in our lists?) Greather Whitethroat (uttering its alarm note, but of course has gone off song or it would be included in our list of birds singing), Ring Dove (still nesting), Jay (screaming as usual, and frightening every wild thing within sound of its voice), and House Martin.

The following few notes are copied exactly as written down in our rough note book:—

Sitting on a fallen Oak in the woods; Jays screaming behind us, Swifts careering round in the meadow just over the hedge bordering the wood, Ring Dove saying to his mate "Don't scold so, Sukyl!" To the left it is dense wood, just where we are writing these lines it has been cut, and makes a nice opening for us to observe what wild life is astir. Turtle Doves are cooing now, and various Tits chattering all around. A little Wren now starts his lively song. On the ground at our feet is Dog's Mercury and Brambles, sweet-smelling Thistles, Helleborine, and Burdock. Bees buzz by in their belts of blue, black, and golden. How glorious the light and shade, the short and lengthened shadows! Not a sound is to be heard but that supplied by Nature herself. Now a Robin utters its winch-like note, the Horses are seen in the park, through the hedge bordering the wood we are in, flicking their tails to keep off the stinging and worrying insects. A few noisy Sparrows are chirruping now, and a Chaffinch is "pinking," whilst a little Coal Titmouse is calling plaintively. The gentle breeze stirs the spreading branches of Oaks and Firs. Not a soul disturbs us; we are only a mile or so from a city of close on 20,000 inhabitants, but not a human being is to be seen or heard. We are alone with Nature. Now a Blackbird utters a chuckle, and the Rooks are cawing to the right of us. We notice the golden ears of the corn through an opening in the hedge, and then dive into the thick recesses of the copse where the sun hardly ever penetrates, where the Enchanter's Nightshade and various Ferns flourish, and Moneywort trails along the ground at the foot of the Marsh Thistles and the

giant Grasses, some of them six feet in height. Here it is cool, inviting, and invigorating, a welcome shelter from the scorching rays of the July sunshine.

Here our little sermon written in the wood closes. Now for a few closing observations made to-day. The delicate red tints of the Maple very beautiful now; the mass of Potato blossom has gone off; the green berries of the Elder noticeable, also berries of the Mountain Ash; many White Butterflies out to-day. The white flora very noticeable now is the Cow Parsnip, Wild Carrot, Scentless Mayweed, and the Yarrow. Seeds of the Dog Rose observable; the Lime has gone off flower; the berries of the Black Bryony getting quite large; many Wood Lice under the bark of an old Oak lying in the woods; what large spreading fronds the Bracken throws in some localities! The Silver Birch noticed to-day, also the Wild Strawberry still bears the luscious, though small fruit.

30th.—Bright; temperature again up to 110 degrees in the sun at 8 a.m. Nice breezes.

31st.—Brilliant sunshine, gentle breezes. There is a very perceptible falling off in the song of the Skylark.

Now that the period of drought has been broken, Mr. Sowerby Wallis, of 62, Camden-square, London, sets out in the "Times" some of the features of this remarkable month.

On the 16th the temperature rose to 95·2 degrees, the highest point recorded in 43 years.

On the 23rd the temperature did not fall below 67·7 degrees, and this is the highest minimum on any night in 43 years.

On five days the temperature rose above 90 degrees: 16th, 95·2 deg.; 19th, 93·4 deg.; 20th, 92·9 deg.; 24th, 90·1 deg.; 25th, 94·0 deg.

On the 19th the temperature was practically at or above 90 degrees from about 1.45 p.m. to 3.45 p.m.

On the 25th the temperature was above 90 degrees from 11.30 a.m. to 5 p.m.

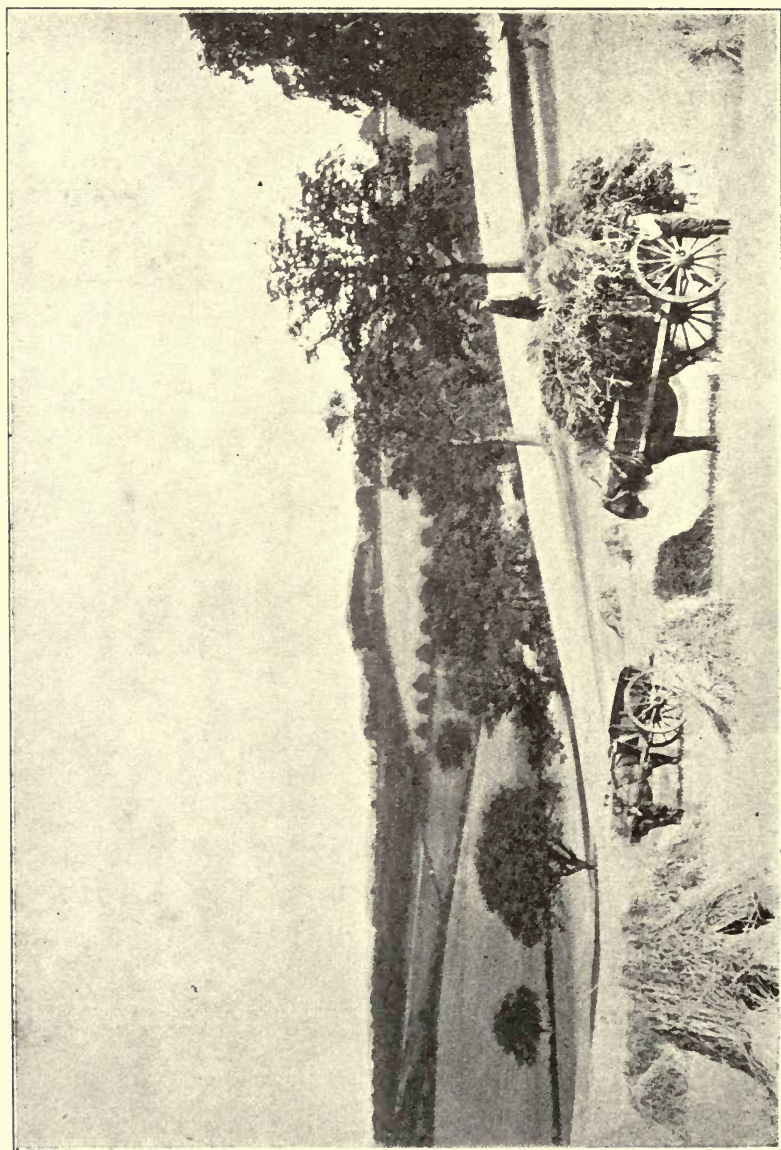
In the 42 years ending 1899, only one July—that of 1863—had

as many as four days with temperature above 90 degrees, the highest being 93.3 deg. on the 21st July, 1859, had three days above 90 degrees, the highest being 91.9 deg. on the 12th July, 1881, had two days above 90 deg., the highest being 94.6 deg. on the 15th.

The temperatures given were of course taken in the shade.



AUGUST.



THE HARVEST FIELD.

AUGUST.

"Summer's lease hath all too short a date."

1st.—Dull; temperature dropped to 60 degrees. Some rain. Hedge Sparrow singing. The Skylark has certainly been very silent this last few days, but a reference to our notes gives us the interesting information that this minstrel has been singing practically without cessation since the 17th February. I heard it last on July 29th, and readers would do well to carefully note my diary as to when it resumes again.

2nd.—Much warmer. 100 degrees in the sun at 8 a.m. The rains of yesterday have made everything look fresh and green again after the drought. The lengthened song period of the Lark has at last temporarily ceased.

3rd.—Gusty, and very heavy, prolonged rains. Hedge Sparrow singing. Harvesting operations at a standstill.

A friend writes me that on July 9th he found on an eyot on the Thames about a dozen Reed Warblers nests with five young Cuckoos distributed amongst them. What a lucky nesting ramble!

4th.—It has blown a fierce gale all night, and very strong N.W. winds prevalent this morning, but nice sunshine. At the same time, it is very cold, and many people have started overcoats again. We are actually shivering! Swifts and Swallows seen.

5th.—Dull and rather cold; rain and very heavy thunderstorm towards evening.

Flowers in bloom:—Oxeye Daisy (surely very late), Field Convulvulus, Nipplewort, Yarrow, White Dead Nettle, Scentless Mayweed, Field Thistle, Scarlet Poppy, Charlock, Hedge Parsley, Bulbous Crowfoot, Field Scabious, Long-rooted Cat's Ear, Sow Thistle, Mugwort, Common Mallow, Wild Carrot, Bramble, White Campion, Red Clover, Dandelion, Sainfoin, Corn Sow Thistle, Groundsel,

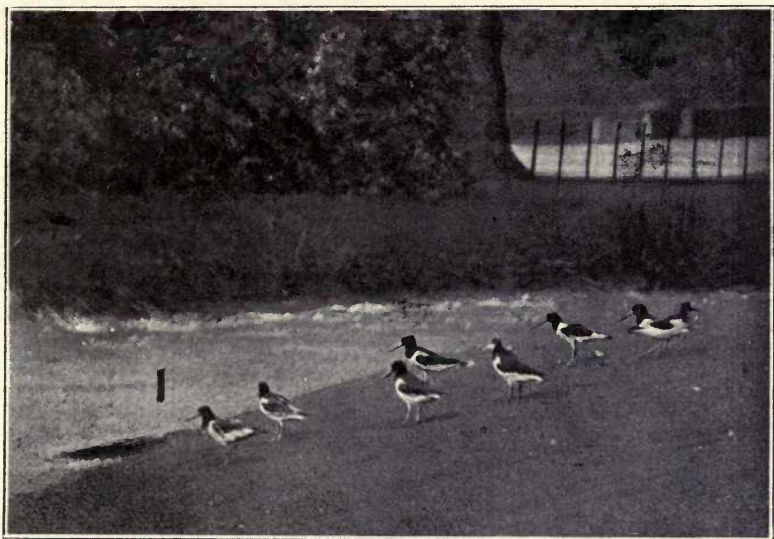
Small Knapweed, Hop Trefoil, Cinquefoil, Cow Parsnip (mostly gone to seed), Perforated St. John's Wort, Daisy, Herb Robert (what a lengthy flowering season this Wild Geranium has), Agrimony, White Clover, Meadow Vetchling, Bird's-foot Trefoil, Hedge Calamint, Traveller's Joy, Upright Meadow Crowfoot, Betony, Harebell, Honeysuckle, Silver Weed (first time included in our lists), Red Dead Nettle (surely coming on bloom for the second time!) Shepherd's Purse (a similar remark applies), Enchanter's Nightshade, Self Heal, Corn Mint, Moneywort, Burdock, Avens, and Rest Harrow. It will be noticed that our list is not nearly so long as a few weeks since.

Birds singing:—I think I have before remarked in this diary how fallacious it is to lay down any hard and fast rule in the Natural History world. I have to-day had a striking example of this, for I have heard two or three Skylarks singing. I quite thought the song period was off for a time, and I still think so, in spite of to-day's jubilation. The songs listened to to-day were by no means well sustained, yet they were uttered, and it is our duty to record the fact in spite of previous remarks a few days since. Robin (gradually resuming its Autumn song; nothing is more welcome at this season than the notes of this Warbler).

Bird seen or heard:—Chaffinch (a few males together sporting in the lane, and "pinking"), Yellow Bunting (still very noisy). House Martin, House Sparrow (a few in the sheaves of corn, but not the hundreds nor the thousands we are told play such havoc with the grain), Swallow, Song Thrush (dibbing on the grass lands), Hedge Sparrow (one or two bob-tailed), Spotted Flycatcher (saw at least half a dozen of these birds this morning; three were perched within a yard or two of one another, ever and anon darting off their watch tower, capturing an insect and then back again), Turtle Dove (disturbed one feeding in the wood; he got up and glanced through the trees, then alighted on an old branch at the top of an Oak, where we had a splendid view of him. This Dove seems an extremely nervous and restless bird), Greenfinch (uttering its well-known note), Starling (mostly in flocks now, and they are very silent now that the nesting season is over), Carrion Crow, Ring Dove, Bullfinch (as I was hiding in the wood a pair came flying right over me, uttering their very plaintive and unmistakable note), Blackbird, Nuthatch (uttering a shrill "wet-weet, wet-weet," and hard at work after the insects on an Oak tree; how the buff breast harmonises with the slaty-grey back), Tree Creeper (alighted on a tree in front of us as we

were watching the industrious Flycatchers), and Coal Titmouse (quite noisy now).

The Thistle-down season has arrived. It is floating everywhere when the wind blows, propagating in situations where it is not at all needed, my garden amongst them. The corn is now waiting for sunshine. Most of it is cut, and a great deal is shocked. The wet weather has stopped operations, and we must have some nice sunshine before the harvest-home takes place. The berries of the Hawthorn quite noticeable now, also the perceptible browning of the Bracken. The Acorns do not seem to have moved much as yet, but so far it looks as if there is a large crop of them. Blackberries are visible; Snowberry still in flower; Beech Mast very prominent now; Rhodo-



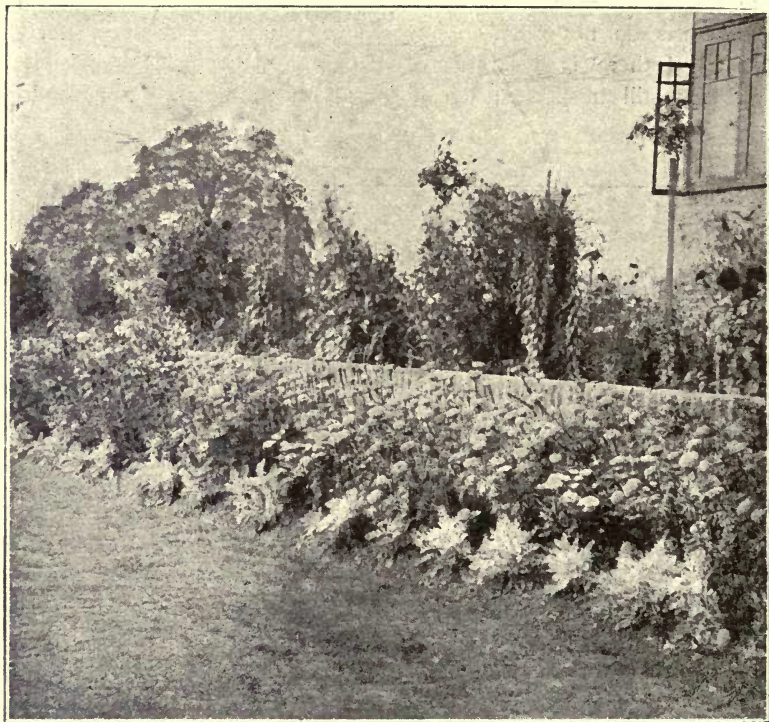
OYSTERCATCHERS IN AN INLAND PARK.

dendrons seeded; tint on cones of Spruce Fir changing. As we go through the rural village we notice the green Grapes on the walls of the homely-looking cottage, and the pleasant smell from the wood fires. Observed a dead Mole by the wayside, and a Common Shrew, and as we sit on the gate by the woodland glade a Rabbit scampers away at our feet. He had been there some minutes unobserved before summing up sufficient courage to bid us adieu. Although I

have many times been in the neighbourhood he frequents, I have not heard the Green Woodpecker's welcome voice for some weeks. Why is he so silent?

Apples in garden tinting and changing colour rapidly.

6th.—Pouring in torrents nearly all day. Wet Holiday is a better name than Bank Holiday, I think. Rooks passing overhead at four o'clock a.m., and House Sparrows very noisy at that hour. I



AFRICAN MARIGOLDS.

have been circumventing the wily Trout and the bull-dog Perch to-day, and whilst doing so got drenched to the skin, but the following notes amply repaid me for the drenching:—Ragwort one mass of blossom still; Common Wren singing continuously; Swifts careering over the lake the whole day long; Green Woodpecker heard; Moorhen dibbing on the mud on opposite bank (how prominent the orange-tipped beak and white tail coverts); porcelain petals of the Water

Lilies very beautiful; Horse Chestnuts getting quite large and come pelting down when the wind blows; Sand Martins and Swallows also flying round the water most of day; pleased to see Kingfisher go darting past; many Jackdaws clamouring overhead; hundreds of Rabbits out on the hillside in his lordship's park, also many Deer; the young Fawns quite strong; noticed the curious fruit of what I believe to be the Black Poplar; Robin uttering winch-like note and singing most of day.

7th.—Fine most of day, but cold winds. The Chickweed is blooming again for the second time, also Shepherd's Purse.

Mr. Hesketh Prichard is shortly starting for Patagonia to hunt for the Giant Sloth or *Pampean Mylodon*, an animal about 12 feet high. It is said to be one of the few surviving animals of the post-glacial period. The expedition is going out at the expense of the "Daily Express." This expedition was originated by the discovery of a piece of dried skin, now in the South Kensington Museum. It was found on the coast of Southern Patagonia, at Consuelo Cove, in Last Hope Inlet, hung upon the trunk of a tree. Having been brought home by Dr. F. P. Moreno, and examined with some other remains of skin, bones, and teeth, it was decided that the discoverers were on the track of the Giant Sloth, hitherto thought to be extinct. It is stated that the creature is, or was, a very ponderous, hairy animal, possessed of little intelligence, the thigh bones being of dimensions unknown in any other animal.

I hear the Hon. Walter Rothschild has this Summer hatched nine American Rhea birds from as many eggs at Tring Park. This is wonderful success, as it is rare for even eight out of nine to hatch in England. No food was given to the young ones for the first three days, after which they were fed on hard-boiled eggs and meal until old enough to be put on the regulation diet of dog biscuits.

8th.—Drizzling rain first thing, but fine later. The evenings draw in very quickly; it is almost dark at 8.15, and the Bats prowl round my house as early as eight o'clock. The Summer is on the wane.

To-day is the 307th anniversary of the birth of Izaak Walton, who was born in 1593.

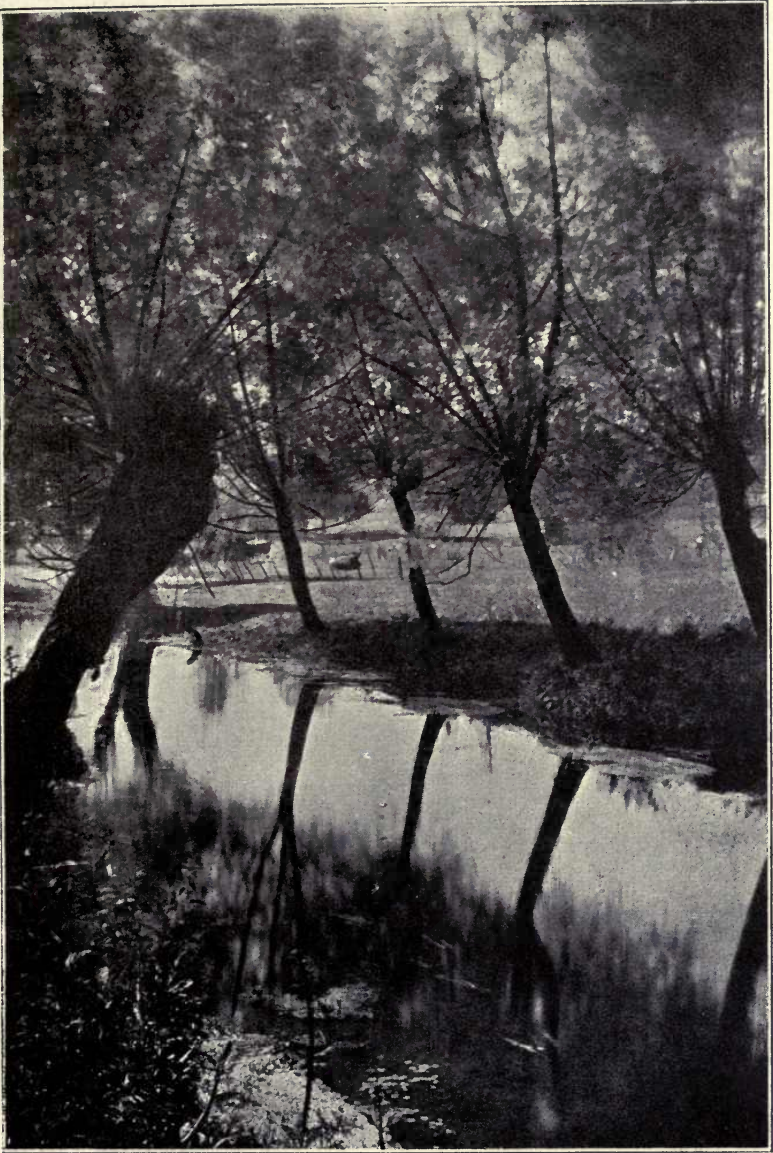
9th.—Dull and threatening early. rain later. Asters in flower in the garden.

10th.—Still very showery, bright between. It is surely getting very serious for the harvest operations, this continuous rain! Roses budding up again for the second blooming.

A list of Butterflies which may be looked for during August is as follows:—Swallow-tail, Large Garden White, Small Garden White, Green-veined White, Bath White, Wood White, Brimstone, Dark Green Fritillary, High Brown Fritillary, Silver-washed Fritillary, Comma, Large Tortoiseshell, Small Tortoiseshell, Peacock, Red Admiral, Painted Lady, White Admiral, Purple Emperor, Marbled White, Mountain Ringlet, Northern Brown, Speckled Wood Butterfly, Wall Butterfly, Grayling, Meadow Brown, Large Heath, Wood Ringlet, Marsh, Ringlet, Small Heath, Brown Hairstreak, White-letter Hairstreak, Purple Hairstreak, Small Copper, Silver-studded Blue, Brown Argus, Common Blue, Adonis Blue, Chalk-hill Blue, Azure Blue, Dingy Skipper, New Small Skipper, Lulworth Skipper, Large Skipper, and Silver-spotted Skipper. A few of the species included in this list are quite rare, but are enumerated for what it may be worth.

The phenomenon of certain species of flowers opening and closing at particular hours has been utilised by an Ohio landscape gardener to add a unique decoration to the grounds of John D. Rockefeller's country seat at Tarrytown. It consists of a flowerbed which can be used as a clock. The bed is circular and divided in twelve parts. Each part contains a figure composed of a flower which opens or closes at the corresponding hour. Thus the two space is occupied by a II., made of Hawkweed, which closes at 2 p.m. precisely. The hands are stationary, of course, and are composed of the common yellow Dandelion, which opens at 5.30 a.m., and closes at 8.30 p.m., and points to arrangements of flowers representing these figures. Among the flowers used are the Snow Thistle, which opens at 5 a.m., and begins to close at 11, but does not fully close until noon; the Yellow Goat's-beard, which opens at 4 a.m., and closes at 4 p.m.; the Blue Chicory, which opens at 4 a.m., and closes at noon; the Morning Glory, Poppy, Water Lily, Pimpernel and Marigold, opening at 5, 7, 8, and 9 a.m. respectively; the Star of Bethlehem, which closes at 11; the Passion Flower, which opens at noon; the Beauty of Night, which opens at 5 p.m.; White Lichnis opening at 6, and the Blue Convolvulus at 2 a.m.

11th.—Morning opened beautifully bright, and much warmer. About 95 degrees in the sun. It has kept fine all day. Hedge Sparrow singing.



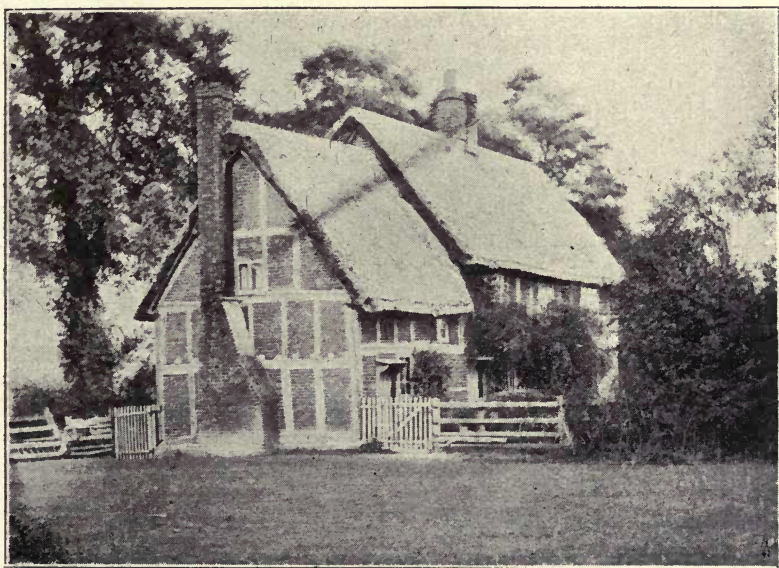
THE WILLOWS.

12th.—Very hot; 114 degrees in the sun at 9 a.m. Dark at 8.15 p.m. How the nights lengthen!

Flowers found in bloom to-day:—Yarrow Scentless Mayweed, Long-rooted Cat's Ear, Dove's Foot Crane's Bill, Bird's Foot Trefoil, Nipplewort (fields and hedgerows one mass of golden from this pretty little flower), Charlock, Creeping Crowfoot, Field Thistle, Small Knapweed (in its flowering prime now), Hedge Mustard, Scarlet Poppy, Corn Sow Thistle (must not be confounded with the Sow Thistle, flowers larger and more ragged), Cinquefoil, Field Convolvulus (still throwing freely the delicate white and pink blossoms), Field Scorpion Grass (often wrongly identified as Forget-me-not), Sow Thistle, Hedge Parsley, Red Clover, Groundsel, Cow Parsnip, Shepherd's Purse, Knot Grass (one's appreciation of this varies considerably, viewed (1) as a wild flower and (2) as a weed in the garden!) Field Scabious, Sainfoin (apparently a late crop noticed during to-day's ramble), Wild Carrot, Red Dead Nettle, Burdock, Dandelion, White Clover, Daisy, Avens, Bramble, Herb Robert, Self Heal (mostly gone off flower), Perforated St. John's Wort (going off rapidly), Chickweed, Small Willow Herb, Hedge Calamint, Lesser Stitchwort (is not this very late ?), Upright Meadow Crowfoot, Harebell, Spear Plume Thistle, Meadow Vetchling, Scarlet Pimpernel, Germander Speedwell (came across several clumps of the last two flowers growing together; how delicate the light blue of the Speedwell as compared with the scarlet of the Pimpernel!) Hop Trefoil, Larger Willow Herb (this is really a very beautiful flower; how curious the fluffy seed-heads of these Willow Herbs); Woody Nightshade (the green and golden berries to be seen as well as the dark Violet flowers), Agrimony (mostly finished), Ragwort, Corn Mint, Enchanter's Nightshade, Foxglove (just a few out in flower still), Hedge Stachys (in spite of former note that this flower has gone off bloom, a few were found to-day, so that its inclusion—as we seek to find out the truth—is inevitable), Betony, Wood Crowfoot, Silver Weed, Oxeye Daisy, Heartsease, Common Mallow, Honeysuckle, Goosegrass, Tansy (first time included in our lists), White Campion, Toadflax, Rest Harrow, Traveller's Joy, Bindweed, Fleabane (just come into flower), Broad Leaved Helleborine (going off rapidly), and Purple Medick (a whole field of this very pretty flower observed to-day).

From this list it will be seen that we still manage to find about seventy species in flower, yet in our last week's notes we remarked that our list was not nearly so lengthy as formerly!

Birds singing—Robin (gradually the Autumn song is being resumed; there is nothing which has a greater charm for me at this season than the song of the Redbreast; there is something so lonely and yet beautiful about it which quite fascinates me. In the early Spring and Autumn I think the song of this bird is most welcome!), Willow Warbler (I heard two of these birds singing to-day. It was early morning when I heard the first one, and I was not certain about it, but towards evening a second bird was singing merrily in an Oak right underneath which I happened to be resting. The song was not nearly so lengthy nor lively as some weeks ago), Common Wren (what a



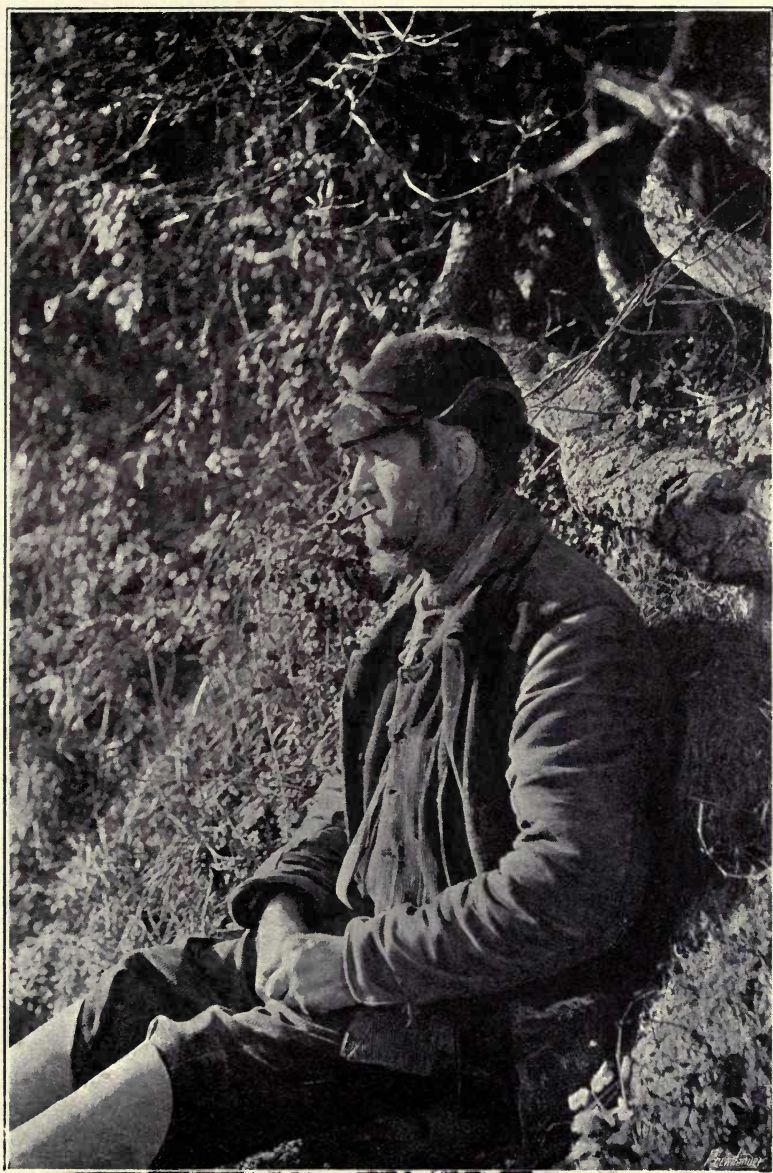
A RURAL COT.

strong song this perky little bird utters). As will be seen, few birds indeed are singing now; many are moulting.

Birds seen or heard:—House Sparrow (a good many on the shocks in the cornfields; one seen carrying nesting materials still!), Swift, Yellow Bunting, House Martin, Blackbird (one bird towards evening was "clucking" in an extraordinary manner), Ring Dove (these are curious birds; the more I see of them the more I think so. When I flush them out of the wood they fly out into the open and take a circuit of a mile or so to get back to where they started from—for they

are still nesting—and if disturbed they will perform the same operation all over again), Chaffinch (one particular bird seen to-day was “pinking” and uttering his song in a very subdued manner, but it could not be called in song, and is not therefore included in our list of birds singing), Greater Whitethroat (heard uttering its scolding note; how we miss that delightful song and those curious song flights, which we shall not be able to enjoy again until next April), Spotted Flycatcher; Swallow (half a-dozen or so often seen together, twittering very musically, but how few people know it ever utters a note, musical, discordant, or otherwise. I watched one bird to-day gliding in and out of a door in a cow-shed, where it evidently had its nest. How unerring its flight; how it swoops and then steadies itself and glides through the doorway to its nest in the rafters), Greenfinch (uttering all manner of indescribable notes), Jay (screaming in the woods and shooting through the thicket like a meteor), Coal Tit, Chiff Chaff (uttering a squeaking “swit-swit-swit,” not the far-better-known notes resembling its name), Marsh Tit (uttering notes something like “Pret-ty-bur-bur-bur-bur,” the “pret-ty” very sharp, quick, and clear ringing, the “burs” somewhat harsh. What a dapper little fellow he is in his black head, throat, and nape, and soft grey plumage), Skylark (twittering slightly on flight, but none heard singing), Starling (uttering all manner of extraordinary notes; a small company together—one of the strangest Avian concerts to which it has ever been my good fortune to listen), Partridge (in among the Turpips), Rook, Turtle Dove (nest of two young ones found. What curious little creatures! Several heard “croo-ing” in the Firs. These birds seem very partial to Oak trees). Throughout our ramble to-day we never encountered a single Song Thrush! We were struck with the number of Robins; they were to be seen or heard at almost every turn.

Many Grasshoppers heard and seen; the fresh red and green leaves of the young Oak saplings noticeable; Corn still standing in shocks waiting for fine weather. How the scene has changed! It seems only yesterday we were jotting down in our little diary the fact that the first ear of Corn had opened; now it has all opened and ripened and been cut and shocked some days! How time passes. The hand of the clock of Nature, too, goes round at a tremendous pace, and the rapidity with which it travels is more noticeable when we take an interest in the things around us. The red seeds of the Wild Arum, or Cuckoo Pint, very noticeable in the woods now, also red and green seeds of the Honeysuckle, the seed bunches of the Ash, the green berries of the Dogwood and Privet, the broad leaves of the



A QUIET PIPE ON A SUNNY BANK.

Plantain, and the red berries of the White Bryony. There are quite a lot of things showing red seeds and berries now, and it is also the Gossamer season. It seems as if it will be a good Walnut year, whilst the Nut stems are loaded with fruit. Many Wasps about; the rows of Mangolds look all the better for the rains of the past few days; the Bees busy to-day on the Thistle heads; and the Dragon-flies are out and about. A pretty little Ladybird settled on my hand; we notice the yellow wings and the seven black dots thereon, and set the creature at liberty again. Noticed an Adonis Blue Butterfly; how delicate and lovely the Nature-painted beauty; the seed-pods of the Meadow Vetchling are very prominent now; also green cones on the Scotch Fir. I noticed particularly to-day how the cones on the Spruce Fir grow for the most part towards the top of the tree. Why is this? The new shoots of the Larch Fir are very beautiful now.

13th.—Bright and warm; over 100 degrees at 8 a.m. A friend tells me that on the night of August 5th a Fox killed no less than twenty-two Pheasants!

14th.—Still very hot; a repetition of the hot weather of some days ago. Asters out nicely in the garden. Swallows twittering pleasantly. Grouse shooting opened yesterday, the 12th being Sunday. Birds were strong and plentiful. coveys large, and birds in better plumage than last year.

15th.—Not so warm, but fine. Hedge Sparrows singing. I never remember seeing so many bob-tailed House Sparrows before. Bats about as early as 7.30 p.m. Rabbits on the frolic in the fields skirting the woods. Many Mushrooms gathered. Crickets chirping nightly. Dark at 8 p.m. Apples in garden almost ready for eating. There are a number of what people call "Mosquitoes" about. These are not Mosquitoes at all, they are Banded Gnats. Mosquitoes—real Mosquitoes, if you like—are nothing but Gnats. There are eight English Gnats, and about half of them are perfectly harmless. The male Insects cannot bite, it is the females which do so. In hot weather there are always more Gnats about than at any other time.

16th.—Bright, but nice gentle breezes. Skylark still silent.

17th.—Heavy dew early, afterwards bright and sultry; thundery. Wild Ducks seen in Poulterers' shops.

Following flowers in bloom in the garden:—Asters, Sunflowers, French Marigolds, Stocks, Flocks, Phloxs, Nasturtiums, Pinks (a few

flowering for the second time), Carnations, Mignonette, Antirrhinums, Japanese Anemones, Dahlias, Roses, Rudbeckias, Geraniums, Canterbury Bells, Sweet Williams, Cornflowers, Garden Mallows, Eschscholtzia, and Violets. Beans ready for picking; Potatoes quite ripe; Carrots and Onions almost ready; Cabbages mostly ruined by caterpillars of the Large Garden White Butterfly.

18th. - Very hot; 110 degrees in the sun at 8 a.m. Many House Sparrows perched on the shocks of Oats in field facing my house. Robin singing. Coal Titmouse very noisy.

19th.—Dull early, afterwards giving place to brilliant sunshine, then dull again towards evening, and very oppressive.

Flowers in bloom:—Long-rooted Cat's Ear, Scentless Mayweed (there is not the mass of white to be seen now as during the last few weeks), Field Thistle (many thousands of Thistles have gone to seed, and to-day the seeds were floating almost everywhere), Nipplewort, Dandelion, Field Convolvulus, White Champion, Yarrow (still flowering strongly, and no signs of going off), Bulbous Crowfoot, White Dead Nettle, Sow Thistle (many gone to seed), Hedge Parsley, Hop Trefoil, Ragwort (going off), Toadflax (in its beauty now, and a very uncommon flower to many people) Bird's Foot Trefoil, Dove's Foot Crane's Bill (coming on flower again rapidly), Chickweed (a similar remark applies), Scarlet Poppy, White Clover, Creeping Crowfoot, Spear Plume Thistle, Charlock, Milk Thistle, Black Horehound (mostly gone off, the pinkish blossoms all rusty brown), Cow Parsnip (the greater portion gone to seed, the brownish pods very conspicuous by the hedgerows now), Musk Mallow, Common Mallow (in my recent notes I wrote, I believe, that both these had finished their flowering period, but here to-day we find them in bloom again! We shall never understand Wild Nature any more than we understand Human nature!), Wild Carrot (the bird's nest seed heads more conspicuous than ever), Small Willow Herb (growing of all places in a newly-made and very stony road), Heartsease, Prickly-headed Poppy, Knot Grass, Red Clover, Small Knapweed (I have not come across the large species this Summer; surely it is not so uncommon!), Shepherd's Purse, Bramble (going off), Wild Thyme, Harebell, Yellow Bedstraw, White Bryony, Woody Nightshade, Cinquefoil, Purple Medick (this violet-coloured flower is really very beautiful; when going off flower it assumes a much paler tint), Groundsel, Scarlet Pimpernel, Field Scabious, Corn Sow Thistle, Bladder Champion, Germander Speedwell (in the scorching August sunshine is it not a relief to come across



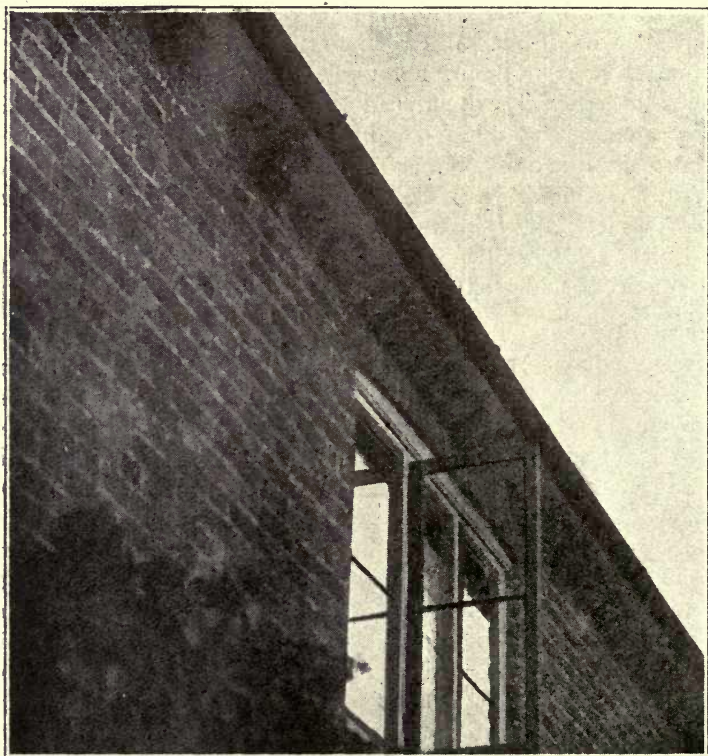
AN AUGUST CUCKOO IN REED WARBLER'S NEST.

this beautiful flower holding up its bird's eye of flowers in defiance of the sun's scorching rays?), Cow Parsnip, Field Scorpion Grass, Upright Meadow Crowfoot, Thyme-leaved Veronica (it is some weeks since this flower was included in our lists, I think), Fumitory, Blue Sherardia (a similar remark applies to this as to the Thyme-leaved Veronica), Traveller's Joy (will soon be out in all its fulness), Herb Robert (this attractive little flower still blooms on), Avens, Betony, Honeysuckle, Corn Mint, Perforated St. John's Wort (passing hence), Hedge Calamint (nearly finished), Lamb's Tongue, Agrimony, Hemp Nettle, Self Heal (nearly all seeded), Hedge Bedstraw (the same remark), Enchanter's Nightshade, Water Figwort (the last time probably of inclusion; I hope this time not to be caught napping! Shaking one of the seed heads, what a curious tinkling sound the small seeds make as they are shaken against the dry vessels!), Hedge Mustard (seems to be coming on again, and it was only recently that we noted its apparent flowering decease), Foxglove (surely the last time of inclusion), Marsh Thistle, Hedge Stachys (in spite of former notes, a few specimens found to-day still in flower, mostly at the top of the plant). It will be noticed our list still exceeds seventy species in bloom.

Birds singing:—Robin (dear little fellow, he is now singing daily his early Autumn song. How glad I am he has returned to my garden; there, when I am digging the "Sensation" Potatoes, picking the White Runner Beans or a button-hole—for, be it said, almost every day of my life I have my flower—is the dapper little chap perched on the fence singing that captivating song. It is the more beautiful and noticeable because nearly every song bird is now silent, and it attracts one more because of the hasty approach of the termination of another season of Nature's handiwork, when one's thoughts turn to the various vicissitudes through which we have passed since last January. I think the Redbreast's song is sweet and mellow, but somewhat melancholy and little varied. Yet to me it is always welcome, but more especially so in early Autumn, and the number of Robins about is very marked. I heard four singing simultaneously to-day within a dozen yards of one another, besides many others, and saw a great number, too, one having the speckled plumage, the red breast being just discernible), Willow Warbler (singing very slightly, and probably the last time of inclusion). The Robin is, therefore, practically the only bird singing now.

Birds heard or seen:—House Sparrow (a good many in the garden after the scraps, in spite of the fact that there is a cornfield in front of my house), Swift (not nearly so many seen; most of them have

left), Ring Dove, Blackbird, Bullfinch, Chaffinch, Greater Whitethroat, Spotted Flycatcher, Coal Tit, Greenfinch, House Martin, Swallow (the two latter species in little companies of from six to a dozen), Song Thrush, Mistle Thrush, Redstart (how attractive the flame-coloured tail feathers as the bird alights), Partridge, Pheasant (disturbed a fine-plumed cock bird skulking in the Turnips), Jay, Skylark, Yellow Bunting, Green Woodpecker (quite a treat to hear the welcome notes of this beautiful bird again), and Hedge Sparrow.



A COLONY OF HOUSE MARTINS' NESTS.

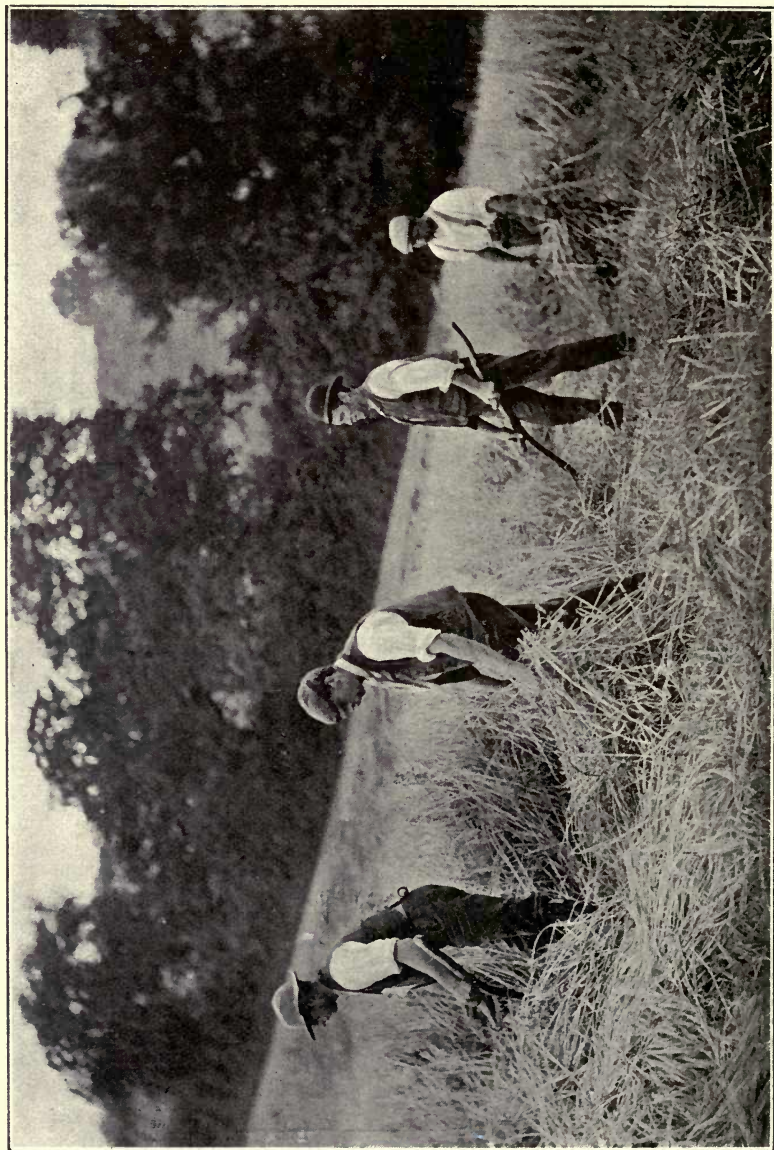
Grasshoppers still to be heard on every side; the red berries of the Woody Nightshade and the Bryony, and the red seeds of the Honeysuckle, more prominent than when we last wrote; Acorns very noticeable now; young shoots of the Furze nice, fresh green. Har-

mony and contrast in wild Nature often seem mingled together; thus, to-day, we noticed a small Blue Butterfly hovering over a clump of purple Wild Thyme. What a contrast, and yet what harmony! The Stinging Nettles seem to sting more sharply just now, though they do not even yet sting the month! Many birds heard to-day were singing in an almost inaudible tone, and unless one sees them it is practically impossible to identify them. They are hidden away in the thick foliage, and rarely leave it during the heat of the day. A great show of Hips and Haws and Mountain Ash, Holly, and other berries. If this is anything to go by, we are to have a hard Winter. The Elderberries are turning dark purple or liver colour, and the birds have already stripped many of the trees. Came across a notice board to-day as follows:—"All persons found trespassing will be prosecuted, and all stray dogs shot"! I wonder the selfish landowner did not include "persons" as well as "dogs" in the latter part of the notice!

More Blue Butterflies about to-day than I have noticed this season. What delicate beauties they are. The Burdock has gone off flower. The Nuts are quickly ripening under the hot August sunshine. Some Blackberries ripe.

The rows of Swedes and Mangolds are looking well just now. Many species of Fungi noticeable. The Broad Leaved Helleborine has gone to seed; noticed that in each pod there are three whitish, flannel-like seeds. A few Wild Strawberries still giving fruit. What a difference in the fields is observable at this season morning and night. In the morning one sees a whole sheet of golden, from the Long rooted Cat's Ear, the Nipplewort, the Sow Thistle, and the Autumnal Hawkbit; at night, that is towards evening, all the golden has disappeared, the flowers named have closed their eyelids, and one can hardly identify the same field under these two conditions.

It is not restful and peaceful to be in the woods just before the gloaming, and then during the gloaming hour? The scene is wonderful because of its stillness. Now and then a restless bird or other wild creature moves, then a Ring Dove tells his loving mate not to scold so; a startled Jay utters its shrieking alarm cry, and shakes the welkin; Bees are still buzzing, and the Night Chafers come out from their hiding places of the day and fly about and across the face as one sits in the wood by the fallen Oak, on which various large Fungi are growing; presently we hear a shriek from a Thrush or a Blackbird, a rustling in the leaves as of a Weasel or Stoat on the prowl or a Hedgehog on the search. We participated in such a scene this evening, and



THE REAPERS.

Owing to thunderstorms corn is laid and cannot be cut by the machine.

could not help noticing the fascination of being in the woods during the gloaming hour. That is, from about 7.30 to 8.30 now. I cannot impress upon my readers too forcibly the desirability of keeping a note-book and jotting down anything they may come across on the spot, as it were. The poet Gray says: "Half a word fixed upon or near the spot is worth a cart-load of recollection," and so it is.

20th.—Much cooler; about 80 degrees in the sun. Robin singing, but Skylark still quite silent. Bats flying round, at 7.30 p.m. Dug some fine Potatoes, though there is a report that disease may be very prevalent, and that the Colorado Beetle is present in large numbers, and may do much harm. My small crop is quite healthy. The beauty of *Eschscholtzia* is not so well known, I think, as it might be. It makes a fine show in the garden, and has a very lengthy flowering period, throwing flower after flower very quickly when once it has started. Some are dark golden all over, others have dark golden centres with delicate light yellow running off to the edges; both are very beautiful. The foliage, too, is delicate and pretty.

21st —Heavy dew early, but sun broke through about breakfast-time; bright rest of day. The harvest is nearly over. During the last few days much Corn has been carted. Never, in some counties, has so much been cut, shocked, and carted within such a few days. In this district, however, most of it was cut and shocked before the recent spell of unsettled weather, and was waiting for sunshine. Now that has come, and the harvest home is once more passed and the sheaves garnered in.

The number of Earwigs is well worth noticing. Robin singing. Bat out, and uttering its feeble squeaking note at 7 p.m.

During a thunderstorm which broke over Hertfordshire just recently the trunk of a tree at Grove Mill, near Hitchin, was struck and destroyed by lightning, which revealed the existence of a colony of Bees. From the condition and quantity of comb and honey they had evidently been there some years. A Bee-keeper was engaged to obtain the honey, a task which was carried out under great difficulties. The colony was a very strong one, for when a large quantity of honey was removed many thousands of Bees could be seen at the base of the hollow.

22nd.—Heavy rains last night; very showery most of day. Young House Sparrows flying about the garden; picked off—with the hands, not with a gun—one from the Beansticks. How warm-blooded, to be

sure! How prominent the yellow at sides of beak. How the little creature already fears a human being!

23rd —Temperature dropped to 56 degrees!

24th.—After a miniature gale, which raged through last night, the bright sunshine this morning was very welcome. Fine all day, and temperature up amongst the eighties again. Noticed two or three Skylarks to-day going over my house in a Southern direction, very high up, and uttering their by no means unmusical twittering note.

In the August issue of the "Zoologist" there is an extremely interesting and useful article on the Bearded Titmouse by Mr. J. H. Gurney. From it we learn that this beautiful bird was first discovered by Sir Thomas Browne, who communicated the fact to John Ray, who published the first notice and description in 1674. Mr. E. L. J. Ridsdale has since stated that the first notice and description appeared in 1575 in "De Avibus," by Conrad Gesner, and this has since been contradicted by the Rev. H. A. Macpherson. Mr. Gurney gives an approximate estimate of their decrease in Norfolk in six decennial periods since 1838, but the earlier figures given are little more than a guess. Here are the figures:—

	1838	1848	1858	1868	1878	1888	1898
Number of nests.....	200	170	140	125	90	45	33

25th.—Bright and warm early, dull later; showery. Robin singing, Swallows and House Martins seen. The Swifts have without doubt now departed.

26. - Dull and overcast most of day; rather chilly.

Flowers found in bloom to day:—Sow Thistle, Scentless May-weed (going off rapidly now), Nipplewort, Dandelion, Groundsel, Yarrow, Creeping Crowfoot, Toadflax, Larger Willow Herb, White Dead Nettle (coming on fast again), Pink Campion, Bird's-foot Trefoil, Field Scorpion Grass, Field Convolvulus, White and Red Meadow Clovers, Charlock, Shepherd's Purse, Mugwort, Hedge Mustard, Dwarf Thistle, Knot Grass, Dove's-foot Crane's Bill, Common Mallow (just a few still in flower), White Campion, Wild Carrot (mostly gone off bloom now, and the bird's nest seed-heads are more noticeable than ever), Hop Trefoil, Purple Medick, Field Scabious, Bindweed, Bladder Campion, Self Heal, Prickly-headed Poppy, Avens, Hedge Calamint, Herb Robert, Bramble, Hedge Stachys (seems to have started flowering again). Upright

Meadow Crowfoot, Small Willow Herb, Harebell, Spear-plume Thistle, Small Knapweed (starting to go off flower), Field Thistle, Agrimony, Lesser Stitchwort (not in flower to any extent, but the apparently new green leaves of this and the greater species, too, may now be seen in the hedgerows, Honeysuckle, Traveller's Joy (how sweet-smelling this Wild Clematis is), Perforated St. John's Wort (nearly finished), Marsh Thistle, Corn Sow Thistle (at its best now), Goosegrass, Woody Nightshade, Hemp Nettle, Germander Speedwell, Cow Parsnip (only one solitary piece found in flower to-day), Scarlet Poppy, Ragwort, Scarlet Pimpernel, Heartsease, Tansy, Autumnal Hawkbit, Daisy (very few out), Hedge Bedstraw (mostly run its flowering course for this season), White Bryony, Black Horehound, Yellow Bedstraw, Pink Persicaria (are not the spots on the leaves curious?) and Black Nightshade. We still manage to muster about seventy species in flower.



CARTING THE CORN.

Bird singing:—I heard the Robin two or three times to-day, but he is not singing so well and prolonged yet as he will later. I saw several to-day in their moulting plumage, some almost without tails and head feathers. When the new plumage is assumed doubtless the song will be uttered loud and long. No other bird singing to-day during our rambles.

Birds heard or seen:—House Sparrow (more conspicuous along the country side to-day than for some time past. Companies of from half a dozen to a hundred or two flying about). Swallow (some still skimming over the meadows; others in batches of a dozen or so high up in the air, flying round, then facing the wind and hanging almost suspended in mid air on buoyant and almost motionless wings, a very curious sight to witness), Chaffinch (uttering the "pink-pink" notes), House Martin, Starling, Coal Tit, Jay (screaming in the woods as usual), Rook, Song Thrush, Ring Dove, Mistle Thrush, Blackbird (what a nervous bird this is, to be sure), Greenfinch, Greater Whitethroat (almost the last time we can expect to see this Warbler), and Yellow Bunting. There seems quite a lull in bird life now, and for the next few weeks I do not suppose we shall see much change. On the arrival of our Winter visitors, the Redwings, Fieldfares, and other birds, and the resumption of the songs of the Mistle Thrush, Skylark, and Wren, the full song of the Redbreast, and the occasional voice of the Song Thrush, Blackbird, and Hedge Sparrow, we shall be better catered for, but for the present we seem somewhat badly off for Avian notes.

The seeds of the Sycamore are turning quite red; the leaf—or in Scientific language the elongated hypsophyll—of the Lime tree to which the inflorescence is adnate is very peculiar and well worth notice. It differs from the foliage leaves both in its yellowish colour and peculiar shape. I noticed them particularly on to-day's rambles. The Acorns are very prominent now, and there is an extraordinary heavy crop. The branches are almost bending under the strain. The berries of the Hawthorn are going quite red, and the white berries of the Snowberry are now to be seen. The rows of Potatoes are bearing flowers again, the Grasshopper's curious love-song is still to be heard, and many Blackberries are quite ripe. The young Ash saplings are noticeable just now, also the second Clover crop. A good many Nuts are ripe, and a more prolific season I hardly remember. In a few minutes to-day I must have gathered two or three pottles! In a few days time, that is if we have some sunshine, they will be quite ripe. The Sloes are to be seen now, and I should just like to note again the great sight of various berries to be seen this Autumn. The Holly, Hawthorn, and Wild Rose bushes and trees are quite smothered. When they turn red they will be a wonderful sight.

27th.—Dull and cold. Searching and keen East winds.

28th.—Very cold and showery. Robin singing.

29th.—Still very cold and dull, but the sun has been trying to break through all day. Swallows and Martins gathering together in little companies.

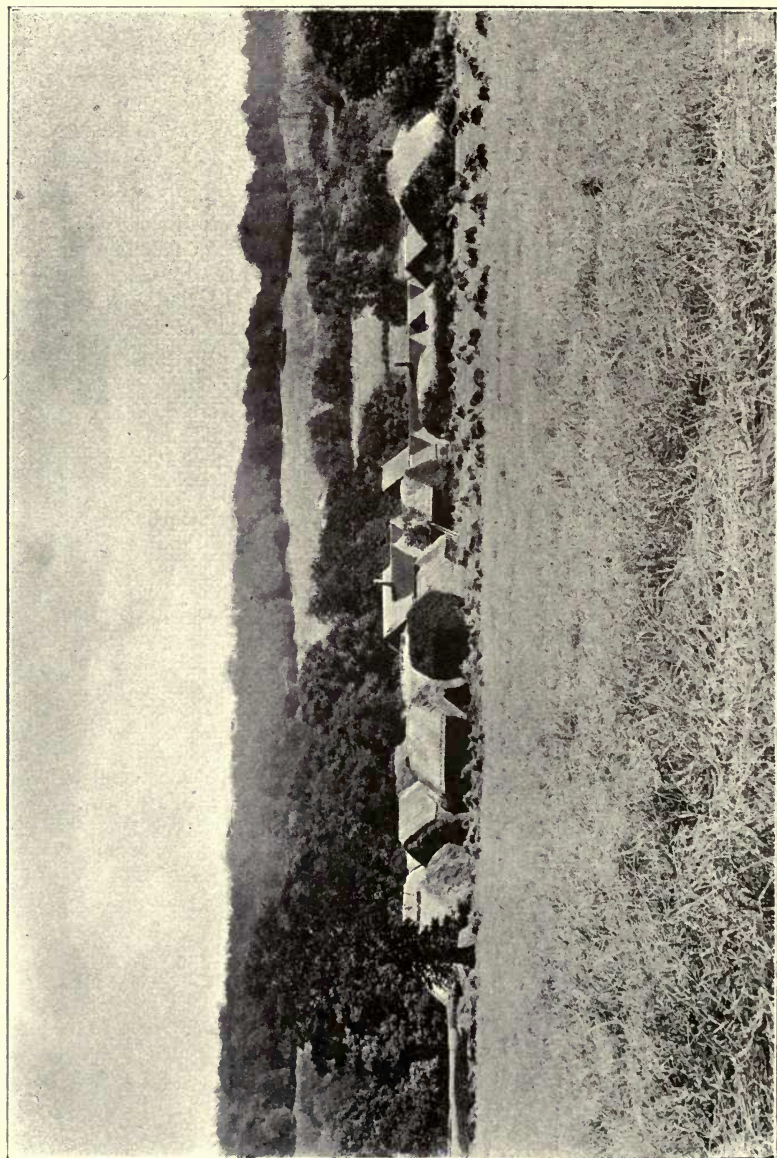
30th.—Dull, but not nearly so cold. Robin singing. Rooks passing over my house to their feeding grounds, cawing loudly as they went.

With further reference to my recent notes as to the re-introduction into England of the Great Bustard, it seems that the project is due to "the public spirit of an English gentleman resident abroad, whose love of Natural History has induced him to incur considerable expense and trouble in the matter." So says that good sportsman, Lord Walsingham, in a letter to the "Norfolk Chronicle," asking for protection for the birds set at liberty. This, according to his Lordship, is now *un fait accompli*. Norfolk is the county chosen in which to turn them out, and let us hope that the pot-shot hunters will give the birds a chance.* These sort of sportsmen (?) stop at nothing, and the Duchess of Bedford has had several of her Storks and Manchurian Cranes shot this year, as well as some Gannets within a few hours of their liberation. It is sixty years ago since the Bustard nested in this Country.

31st.—Unusually heavy dew early, but bright and warm later. Robin singing, Bat flying round the garden just after 7 p.m. It is quite dark by 7.30 p.m. now.

* Since this was written some of the Bustards have been shot, and fines (not half heavy enough) inflicted upon the malicious individuals responsible for such unscrupulous practices. We believe the birds still left are doing fairly well.

SEPTEMBER.



A TYPICAL SEPTEMBER SCENE.

SEPTEMBER.

"Now Summer has one foot from out the world,
Her golden mantle floating in the air."

1st.—Heavy rain early, bright towards afternoon. Partridge shooting season commenced. Prospects in most counties said to be gloomy; the heavy rains in July killed many of the young birds. On looking at my diary for that month, however, I find we had very little rain indeed. so that this report must be wide of the mark. In this district I have seen some very nice coveys, the birds seeming strong on the wing, and some friends of mine (four guns) shot over fifty brace in a few hours. I was amused to-day at a placard in a London poulterers, as follows:—"These Grouse were shot by the Duke of York on Castle Grant Moor!" As if the birds were any better for being shot by the Duke of York! What is the world coming to?

2nd.—Dull; temperature about 70 degrees. Fitful gleams of sunshine.

Flowers in bloom:—Charlock, White Campion, Dove's-foot Crane's Bill, Scentless Mayweed, Nipplewort, Shepherd's Purse, Mugwort, Autumnal Hawkbit, Sow Thistle, Hedge, Mustard, Perforated St. John's Wort, Red Clover, Knot Grass, White Clover, Field Convolvulus, Field Thistle, Groundsel, White Dead Nettle, Purple Medick, Scarlet Poppy, Yarrow, Wild Carrot, Cow Parsnip, Small Knapweed (going off flower very rapidly), Creeping Crowfoot, Hedge Parsley, Bramble, Hedge Stachys, Herb Robert, Honeysuckle, Germander Speedwell, Toadflax, Lesser Stitchwort, Cinquefoil, Ragwort, Hop Trefoil, Agrimony, Bird's-foot Trefoil, Self Heal, Harebell, Traveller's Joy, Dandelion, Avens, Spear-plume Thistle, Hemp Nettle, Greater Bindweed, Upright Meadow Crowfoot, Field Scabious, Common Mallow, Heartsease, Long-rooted Cat's Ear, and Flax.

Birds singing:—The Robin is still the only bird in song. Watched a male and female in the garden. The male was uttering

the note similar to noise made by slowly winding up a clock, and the female a sissing, hinge-like, and weak "peesit, peesit, peesit."

Birds seen or heard:—Swallow (still skimming gracefully over the now fresh green meadows, and looks like staying some weeks longer yet); Chaffinch, Starling, Blackbird, Ring Dove, Jackdaw, Rook, Pheasant, Jay, Bullfinch (to call this bird, one must whistle just one note as softly and quietly as possible; a friend of mine has succeeded in rearing a nest of five of these birds this Summer), and Skylark (still silent).

The smell in and near the woods is well worth noting; it is by no means unpleasant. Noticed in the orchards a splendid crop of Damsons and the beautiful bloom on the luscious Apples. The Hips and Haws are quickly changing colour; the latter are mostly quite red now, whilst the Horse Chestnuts are assuming quite a golden colour. The various Mosses are very well worth a study just now, and the extraordinary crop of Acorns must again be noted. How rare it is that one comes across two or more Oaks exactly like each other! Either the cutting of the leaf is different, or some other variation. I am told the reason is because they are all propagated from seed. Our last notes for to-day (1), what a study it is to go out in the garden with a light at night, and observe the various creeping and crawling creatures there to be seen, and (2) the Natural History of the inhabitants of the water-butt!

3rd.—Dull mostly, with occasional sunshine; warm. Whilst fishing to-day the Robin was to be heard on every side. House Martins and Swallows dipping in the pool, and a pair of Goldfinches heard and seen in a tall Fir. This is the first occasion I have observed these birds in my district this year. I was so pleased to hear the unmistakeable call-note to-day. We were in private grounds, so that this accounts for the presence of the birds, perhaps. On the other side of the pool various beautiful flower beds made up of scarlet and pink Geraniums, many coloured Asters, and French Marigolds attracted our notice, and were strikingly reflected in the water. Starling and Blackbird heard, Song Thrush seen. The Water Lilies have finished flowering. Heard a Wren singing, and observed two or three Spotted Flycatchers still busy Fly-catching. The Weeping Willow never looked better than just now, the Moorhen's "crook" never sounded more pleasantly. Great Tits in the Yew trees; the red fruit on the trees very noticeable; a pair of Pied Wagtails went over crying "Cheese-it, cheese-it," The livelong

day Large White Butterflies have been coquetting ceaselessly together over the surface of the looking-glass pool. Different varieties of Rudbeckias in the garden making a brilliant show of yellow. Everything looks fresh and green after the heavy rain of the first instant.

4th.—Bright, with a blue June sky. Starlings in flocks; could not help noticing particularly to-day the very pretty twitter of the Swallow. Small Willow Herb and Corn Sow Thistle still in flower, also Scarlet Pimpernel. Came across quite a large number of spotless White Turkeys in a park. A friend tells me he photographed a young Cuckoo in a Reed Warbler's nest as late as last month. The moss-like bunches on the Dog Rose are very prominent now. They call them locally "pin-cushions." Little Maggots cradled in cavities in the swollen wood is the cause of this wondrous growth. Already sere leaves one by one are strewing the ground. Autumn is upon us.

5th.—Bright and warm; most perfect weather. Betony, Wood-sage, Water Mint, Orpine, Broad-leaved Plantain, Pink Campion, Fleabane, Water Forget-me-not, Brooklime, Pink Persicaria, Silver Weed, Hedge Stachys, Purple Loosestrife, and Devil's Bit Scabious found in flower. Wren singing now and then; Robin almost continually. Swallow's nest found in boathouse by a pool. The parent birds in and out the whole day long. The Rooks seem more noisy now than during any other period of the year. Whilst fishing to-day there were in the surrounding fields thousands of these birds and Jackdaws. About an hour after sunset (which took place about 6 p.m.), it was indeed a sight to see phalanx after phalanx come in to the woods to roost. There must have been many thousands of birds. Never have I seen so many Rooks or Jackdaws before. Heard the Chiff Chaff uttering its Spring notes several times, and saw two or three Reed Warblers. The music of the Rushes by the water as they are blown by the wind is very curious. One of the pleasantest of rural sounds now is the welcome noise of the threshing machine. Many large Dragon flies flying about the pool to-day, several Starlings observed on the lawns, and also Pied Wagtails. How hard the ploughmen have to work! Autumn ploughing is now taking place, and the Rooks know it. They come down on the newly turned up land like a pack of Wolves, and have a royal feast. Has the reader ever looked through a pair of field glasses at a flock of these birds on the wing? The sight is wonderful, that is if the sun is shining and one sights them just as they rise from the ground. The lullaby of the cow-bells distinctly pleasing to-day, also the laugh of the Green Woodpecker. Several little companies of Wild Duck



A MEMENTO OF THE GREAT FRUIT CROP OF 1900.

went over us, their long necks very prominent; a Hawk appeared during the day, and although we caught not a single fish we have had a most enjoyable day, and been enabled to make quite a few Natural History jottings.

6th.—Bright, but somewhat cooler, still over 100 degrees in the sun. Ring Doves flapping about in the tree where we fished to-day. Robin singing, Rooks and Jackdaws very noisy and plentiful, although we went in a totally different direction to yesterday. Many Song Thrushes and Blackbirds seen, also Rabbits. Thyme-leaved Veronica in flower again.

7th.—Still the most perfect weather possible, a few slight showers towards evening. Beautiful clear moonlight nights now. The Toad-flax is in its beauty now, and the Field Scabious is still blooming. The former is one of the chief features in our flora at this season.

I spent to-day a most enjoyable time at Tring Museum with my esteemed friend the curator, Mr. Ernst Hartert. In my book "A Year with Nature," I have already written an article on the Museum and Zoo at Tring, and have not the space to enlarge here. I should like to mention, however, that I had the pleasure to-day of being shown the two clutches of young Rheas born in Tring Park. They are elegant and graceful little creatures, but Mr. Hartert is afraid all will not survive the Winter. One or two have already succumbed. Went to the splendidly kept grounds at Dundale, and on and near the water there was pointed out to me several American Bull Frogs, Egyptian Geese, Wild Ducks, Ruddy Sheldrakes, Pochards, Tufted Ducks, and other Wild Fowl. Since I last visited the museum the Zebra collection has been greatly added to, and a very valuable addition is a couple of Ribbon Fish, the most curious creatures imaginable, being about fifteen feet in length, an inch or two across, and a foot or so deep, with curious ribbon-like appendages on the head. It was reported to Mr. Sullivan, who captured it, as a "Sea Serpent," and was taken near Dunedin, New Zealand, whilst the second one was taken, if my memory serves me correctly, at Flamborough Head. The case of Humming Birds was also new to me. It is without doubt the finest collection in the whole world. It is worth noting that there are about 500 species at present known, and the number of eggs is always two, and their colour is invariably a glossless white. After fishing several days this week without success it was quite refreshing to observe two Pike, weighing respectively 36 and 37 pounds, a 13-ounce Dace, and several very fine Perch, Roach, Rudd, and Carp. Nobody at all interested in

Natural History should fail to see this marvellous collection, so dexterously managed and arranged by Mr. Hartert and his assistants, and the public, and of course students, are under a great obligation to the owner of this priceless collection for placing such grand opportunities in their way for amusement, observation, interest, and research. With these few short notes on my visit I must perforce close.

8th.—Bright, with nice gentle breezes; about 85 degrees in the sun. Of an evening it is quite a study to be by the water or in the low-lying meadows just now for the purpose of watching the mist rise and envelop the surrounding fields, giving the same the appearance of a huge lake. The same may be seen at early morning, but the sun soon makes its presence felt over the dew-spattered meadows, and an hour or so after sunrise one may with safety rest upon the recently dewy mead. The effect of the coming and the going of this phenomenon is very striking, but having noticed it more or less every day for the last fortnight, we have now got quite used to it.

9th.—Still the most perfect weather imaginable. Almost the most enjoyable and delightful part of the year, only the days get so terribly short. It is dark at 7 p.m.

Flowers found in bloom:—Creeping Crowfoot, Charlock, Scentless Mayweed, Nipplewort (no signs of going off flower yet), Field Thistle, Shepherd's Purse, Groundsel, Knot Grass, White Clover, Dandelion, Yarrow (there is a falling off noticeable now), Hedge Mustard, Autumnal Hawkbit, Sow Thistle (finished almost), Parsnip, Hop Trefoil, Dove's-foot Crane's Bill, Upright Meadow Crowfoot, Red Clover, Blue Sherardia, Long-rooted Cat's Ear, Dwarf Thistle, White Campion, Field Scabious, Prickly-headed Poppy, Field Convolvulus (a very conspicuous falling off in the number of these flowers), Black Horehound (about the last time of inclusion), Perforated St. John's Wort, Heartsease, White Dead Nettle (quite a quantity in flower again), Small Knapweed, Harebell, Yellow Bedstraw (just a little only in flower, mostly seeded), Wild Carrot, Wild Thyme, Bird's foot Trefoil, Lesser Stitchwort, Bramble, Herb Robert, Ragwort, Marsh Thistle, Chickweed, Self Heal, Small Willow Herb, Betony, Hedge Calamint, Red Dead Nettle, Germander Speedwell (quite a lot of this pretty little Speedwell in flower again), Avens, Agrimony, Honeysuckle, Traveller's Joy (assuming the Daddy's Beard form now), Cinquefoil, Cow Parsnip, Scarlet Pimpernel, Scarlet Poppy, Corn Sow Thistle, Black Nightshade, Pink

Persicaria, Forget-me-not, Greater Bindweed, Woody Nightshade, Toadflax, Tansy, Daisy, and Purple Medick. It will be noticed that we still find nearly seventy species of flowers blooming.

Birds singing:—The only bird in song is still the Robin.

Birds seen or heard:—Swallow (heard a number of these birds in chorus; the effect very delicate and beautiful); Hedge Sparrow, Skylark (just uttering a mere twitter), Nuthatch (seen and heard uttering the shrill "chip, chip, chip, chip" notes), Chaffinch, Ring Dove, Starling (in large flocks), Great Tit, House Martin, Jay, Blackbird, Spotted Flycatcher (I have never observed so many of these birds as I have this Summer; they have been very numerous), Song Thrush (one or two seen to-day evidently in moult, many feathers on head and neck missing), Rook, Jackdaw, Marsh, Coal, and Long-tailed Titmice (came across quite a little colony of these birds in a Willow thicket. The Coal Tit especially was in fine plumage, the white nape being very noticeable and the white patch at back of head. The Marsh Tits were hanging on the some thistle-heads, extracting the seeds in a wonderful manner. This reminds me that Tits are also very fond of the seeds of the Sunflower, and will visit gardens for that purpose).

Great many Grasshoppers about still; many Large Garden White and Blue Butterflies out, also Small Tortoiseshells. The delicate lemon colour of some of the Crowfoots is very noticeable just now. Blackberries ripe. Found some Mignonette growing wild, but apparently carted there with some refuse, or by birds. The curious seed heads of the Agrimony are worth mentioning, also the black berries of the Dogwood. Where we rambled to-day the grasses and flowers, &c., by the hedgerows had all been lowered by the scythe, so that several flowers were not to be observed. The red berried and seed-laden hedgerows more prominent than when we last wrote; the browns and yellows of the trees very perceptible. The Rabbits were disporting themselves in the fields bordering the woods, and we noticed a pitched battle between a large Bluebottle Fry and a Spider. The Fly won, and the Spider, coward-like, hied away disgusted and defeated at his own game.

10th.—Dull early, bright and warm later. Breezy and cloudy towards evening.

Flowers blooming in garden:—Nasturtium, Sunflower, Flock, Phlox, Rudbeckias, Cornflowers, Japanese Anemone, Rose, Stock, Aster, Antirrhinum, French Marigold, Eschscholtzia, Canterbury

Bell, Double Daisy, Dahlia, Lobelia, Geranium, Sweet Pea, Garden Mallow, Pansy, and Orpine.

Noticed more Grasshoppers to-day than any time before this year. How their wings vibrate, and make the curious love-song! How they hop, skip, and jump!

A list of probable September Butterflies is as follows:—Swallow-tail, Pale Clouded Yellow, Clouded Yellow, Brimstone, Comma, Large Tortoiseshell, Small Tortoiseshell, Peacock, Red Admiral, Painted Lady, Speckled Wood, Wall Butterfly, Grayling, Large Heath, Small Heath, Brown Hairstreak, Small or Common Copper, Common Blue, Adonis Blue, Chalk-hill Blue, and Azure Blue.



HUMBLE BEE.

11th.—Bright for the most part, dull at times. About 90 degrees in the sun. House Martins twittering pleasantly overhead. Many young House Sparrows in the garden. The Humble Bees at the flowers continuously, they having a special liking for the Nasturtiums and the Antirrhinums. How interesting to watch them enter and leave the latter curious-shaped flowers! Robin uttering its evening vesper song.

12th.—Bright and warm. Heavy fog early. Chiff Chaff heard. Meadow Sweet in flower. Although, as our diary shows, we have rambled a good deal during the year, this is the first time we have come across this flower. How curious Swans look when flying, especially as seen through a glass. Many on the lake where we fished to-day. Pleased to see a pair of Kingfishers, and a flock of about fifty Lapwings went over. Green Woodpecker and Nuthatch heard frequently. Saw Common Tern shot by keeper, and informed the Pochard breeds on the water, this being within twenty-five miles of London. Caught several Roach well over one pound, and several Pike, the largest 13lbs., the smallest 5lbs.

13th.—Brilliant sunshine still. Swallows and House Martins very noisy overhead. Robin singing, and Chiff Chaff heard.

14th.—Weather still perfect. Not such heavy dews this last night or two. Swallows and House Martins seen, also large flock of

Lapwings on some newly-ploughed land, all with their heads turned towards the wind—S.E. How beautiful they look through a glass when in such a position upon the rich brown soil.

Robin singing continuously; song more sustained, and louder. Spotted Flycatchers seen.

Gathered a large bunch of Field Marguerites and very tall Water Grasses; surely very late for the former. Many Scarlet Poppies in flower, also Larger Willow Herb, Meadow Vetchling, Pink Persicaria, Fleabane, and Devil's Bit Scabious Also in flower: the Broad-leaved Plantain, Upright Meadow Crowfoot, Yarrow (how beautiful the pink and red variety, especially when examined through a glass), and Sow Thistle.

Great Tit appeared in the Rushes by the water. Robin came to drink, and settled on the Lotus leaves. Many Moorhens "crooing," Kingfisher seen. Skylark heard uttering its full song as it was being chased by two or three others; surely uttered in anger or defiance, by no means strong or sustained. Only a minute before we had written in our note-book, "Skylark still silent."

Received a Red-necked Grebe in splendid Winter plumage, the same having been shot at Poole, Dorset, some time last year by a punt gunner.

I have been reading with much pleasure and profit just lately Mr. W. H. Hudson's book "Nature in Downland." The author writes of "The useless Heron," but does not this noble bird partake very largely of Rats, and thus help in ridding the land of these rodents? What pleases me, however, is Mr. Hudson's eulogium on the Skylark, for I, too, have listened to that minstrelsy on the Downs, and been fascinated by it. It is also gratifying to read of the abundance of House Martins, Swallows, and Swifts. Cannot the strange fact about the male Swifts disappearing cloudwards towards evening for a night out (so it is said) be settled some way or the other? I have noticed the strange phenomenon many times during the past Summer, but it still remains a mystery. Has anyone stayed near their nesting places throughout the night to see that the birds did not return before sunrise?

15th.—Dull early; bright and hot later.

16th—Heavy dew early, bright and warm later, but dull and cloudy towards late afternoon. Lovely sunset at 6 p.m. Lightning after 9 p.m., and very dark.

Flowers in bloom:—Dandelion, Knot Grass, Nipplewort, Scentless Mayweed (still going off flower very prominently), Hedge Mustard, Autumnal Hawkbit, Red Clover, Field Thistle, Charlock (one mass of yellow again), Shepherd's Purse, Groundsel, Sow Thistle, White Dead Nettle, Harebell, Avens (never seems to be in flower properly), Herb Robert (still as beautiful and welcome as ever), Long-rooted Cat's Ear (this is really a very lovely wild flower; called "that Dandelion thing" by unintelligent, and, indeed, by most people), Dove's-foot Crane's Bill, White Champion, Field Convolvulus, White Clover, Common Mallow (out again in a mass of delicate pink bloom), Prickly-headed Poppy, Wild Carrot, Scarlet Poppy, Purple Medick, Field Scabious, Lamb's 'Tongue, Yarrow, Cow Parsnip,



THE LAST LOAD.

Hedge Stachys (not to any extent), Hedge Parsley, Traveller's Joy (going off flower rapidly), Small Knapweed, Hedge Bedstraw, Cinquefoil, Upright Meadow Crowfoot, Lesser Stitchwort, Bramble, Spearplume Thistle, White Bryony, Honeysuckle, Bird's-foot Trefoil, Daisy (only a very few in flower), Self Heal, Heartsease, Scarlet Pimpernel, Meadow Vetchling, Bush Vetch (a single piece in flower), Agrimony, Germander Speedwell, Hop Trefoil, Chickweed, Perforated St. John's Wort, Black Horehound, and Fumitory. It will be noticed that our

list to-day only reaches just over fifty species, the lowest number we have had for some weeks.

Birds singing:—Robin continuously, and sweeter and louder than of late. Gradually resuming the beautiful Autumn song. The song reminds me of a small and sweet musical box, played slowly. Heard two Skylarks singing to-day, but the song was not well sustained, and the resumed song-period has not yet, I think, arrived. Still, hearing the well-known notes again was very welcome, and afforded much pleasure. Common Wren singing slightly, but not to any extent.

Birds seen or heard:—Rook (the "croo"-ing love song very pleasant), House Sparrow (very noisy), Swallow, Carrion Crow, Chiff Chaff (heard in full voice again), Chaffinch, Ring Dove (seems to be increasing by leaps and bounds), Great Tit, Pheasant, Nuthatch (I never remember hearing so many of these birds as I did during my ramble to-day), Blackbird, House Martin, Starling. Pied Wagtail (I have seen more of these birds during the past Summer than ever before), and Jay.

The leaves have commenced to fall. Nature's Summer dress is beginning to be thrown off, and ere the Autumn garb has become familiar to us, the bare, rude dress of Winter will be worn by *her*, for it was ever *Dame* Nature. The keys on the Sycamore are browning considerably, and amongst the earliest trees which bear traces of Autumn are the Maple and the Hornbeam, the foliage of both of which is a very pronounced yellow in many places now. How very pretty the red-tipped buds of some of the Hawkweeds are! The Grasshoppers are still noisy, and the Nuts are ripe, slipping out of the shells quite easily. Going across a newly-ploughed field to-day we remembered that it was here we noticed a few short weeks ago the Field Scabious in plenty; the delicate Rest Harrow in all its beauty; the Scarlet Poppy in all its gorgeousness and bright array; the nodding golden heads of full ripe Corn. It was here, too, we noticed the first green shoots in early Spring, then later the throwing up of the ear-blades; but all is past and gone, and we now see the lately ploughed and still later rolled earth, looking rich and red in spite of the crop which it has so recently borne. Not a vestige of green or a single wild flower is to be seen anywhere on or near the field, and we are interested only by meditating upon what it has been to us during the past Summer, and how long it will be before it again supplies us with food for observation. The Ivy is in flower, and the berries of the Privet are darkening very rapidly. The Acorns are

very much larger now, and are commencing to pelter down when the wind blows.

Now that there is such a lull in the Avian choir or chorus, or whatever you will, we may notice more prominently such birds as Nuthatches' Tits, Creepers, and Woodpeckers. Do you hear that curious vibrating noise? That is a Lesser Spotted Woodpecker "drumming," as we Naturalists call it. Did you catch that curious whistle just now? That was an ochre-breasted, short-tailed Nuthatch calling to his mate. Do you hear that loud tapping in the Oak just above us? It is not a Woodpecker, but a Great Titmouse knocking at the doors of the insect and larvæ houses to see if anyone is at home.



PELICANS.

Do you see those noisy, flapping creatures going through the tall Firs yonder? They are Ring Doves just coming in from their feeding grounds. Do you hear that sweet musician at your elbow almost? That is a melodious-voiced Redbreast pouring out his pæan of glory. Do you observe that black-capped, ashy bird in the hedge opposite? That is a Coal Titmouse diligently searching for its insectivorous bill of fare. Do you see that sober plumed bird on the top of the hedge-row now, uttering 'cheep, cheep'? That is a Hedge Sparrow, one of

the most delightful little Warblers we possess. These are a few jumbled notes written down on my scribbling tablet when I was out this Sabbath morning.

The bloom on the now scarlet Hips very attractive. Many Small White Butterflies out. Noticed particularly to-day how like some of the Robins sing to the Willow Wren. The golden and red leaves of the Bramble showing; also the dark copper leaves of the Black Bryony. I saw one Robin to-day I shall never forget. Besides having a red breast it had also a red head. It was a most lovely creature. It quite dumbfounded me for a moment or two. The Larch Fir looks a trifle ragged now, if I may be so understood, and with this remark our notes for to day are brought to a close.

17th.—Dull early; bright and very warm later. It is now quite dark at 7 p.m.

18th.—Dull early; not so bright, but still fine and warm. Three Robins singing simultaneously within a stone's throw of my garden. Rooks noisy overhead, passing to their feeding grounds.

19th.—One of the most perfect mornings possible. Bright early, 104 degrees in the sun. Robin singing, and I believe I heard the Skylark, but fancy it was a captive bird. These sing even when their wild relations are silent.

20th.—Lovely and bright again. Heavy dews last night.

21st.—Perfect weather still. About 90 degrees in the sun. Cloudy towards evening. Robin singing daily. Violets in bloom in the garden, smelling most deliciously. A Mallow in my garden is throwing a pure white flower; all my others are brilliant red. What is the cause of this? It was propagated from seed gathered last season from plants which threw all red flowers!

22nd.—Very dull early; bright later. Robin and Skylark singing. There is a fine-voiced Goldfinch somewhere near my house. It is caged, of course, but it sings a sweetly pretty song, and although I have never seen the bird I admire it, and each time I go into the garden I listen for its sweet strains. Marguerites in flower in garden, also a second blooming of White Pinks.

In an upholsterer's and furniture dealer's shop in this city there is a fine Black Bear standing on its two hind legs, its fore-paws serving for the purpose of holding a tray, on which at night a lamp is placed. This animal attracts a good deal of attention, and most

people know what it is; but standing near an admiring crowd this evening I was surprised to hear an intelligent-looking man say, "Look at that Shark!"

A most beautiful young Barn Owl was brought to me this evening. It was a young bird of the year, and was found sitting on the cricket ground in Clarence Park this morning. I will not say how the lovely creature met its death, but it was evidently unwell, and allowed its captor to deal out death to it. Which to admire most about the splendid plumage I know not. Whether the score or so of large wing feathers—white and light chestnut, with pencillings of dark ashy colour—or the pure snowy breast; abdomen; and legs, and inside of wings, or the pretty frill or bib feathers (white, tipped with brown and dark ashy)—or the peppery back and head together with chestnut. This is just a short description of the salient features of the plumage, but I should also add a note as to the short tail, the formidable talons, and the peculiar beak feathers and curious situation of feathers round the eyes.

I have never seen one of these lynx-eyed feathered creatures in such lovely plumage, and would have given much to see it alive. The bird, I am pleased to say, has been preserved.

23rd.—Dull and cloudy early; bright later. Beautiful white and blue sky towards mid-day, blue background, with floating snow-white patches.

Flowers in bloom:—Groundsel, Field Thistle (all the Thistles are going off now), Charlock, Shepherd's Purse. Knot Grass (at its flowering height now), Yarrow, Scentless Mayweed, Nipplewort, Toadflax, Long-rooted Cat's Ear, Perforated St. John's Wort, White Campion, Dandelion, White Clover, Autumnal Hawkbit, Hop Trefoil (out in a blaze of yellow again), Red Clover, Dove's-foot Crane's Bill, Wild Carrot, Field Scabious, Field Convolvulus, Fumitory, Sow Thistle, Creeping Crowfoot, White Dead-nettle, Scarlet Poppy, Common Mallow, Purple Medick, Cow Parsnip, Small Knapweed (will soon be finished), Dog Violet (I have some Violets in flower in the garden, but never expected to find this flower also blooming), Spear-plume Thistle, Upright Meadow Crowfoot, Harebell (no scorching sun seems to affect this pretty flower), Hedge Calamint, Honeysuckle, Herb Robert, Traveller's Joy], (probably last time of inclusion as in flower), Cinquefoil, Hedge Mustard, Germander Speedwell (quite a lot out in bloom), Scarlet Pimpernel, Heartsease, Prickly-headed Poppy, Self Heal (found a piece to-day throwing pure

white flowers instead of the usual violet-coloured ones. I am informed that there is a tendency to albinism in many wild flowers, and a friend has found pure white specimens of Herb Robert at various times), Agrimony, Corn Sow Thistle, Ox Tongue, Forget-me-not, Goosegrass, Hedge Stachys, Mugwort, Field Scorpion Grass, Daisy, Corn Mint, and Enchanter's Nightshade (a solitary piece found in flower only). We have to mourn the loss of several species of flowers because the mower's scythe has been along and cleared the hedge banks and ditches of their flora.

Birds singing:—Robin, Skylark (quite a number have resumed song again now, and I am so pleased, because this is my favourite musician. I looked and listened at the feathered musicians to-day with admiration, and hope now that the song will be uttered for many weeks to come. I have ascertained that the Lark I wrote of a few days since as "might have been a captive" is such), and Common Wren (not at all sustained, but occasionally).

Birds seen or heard:—Pied Wagtail, House Sparrow (very noisy), Rook (also very noisy now), Starling, Chiff Chaff (heard and seen, probably the last time of inclusion for 1900), Fieldfare (a couple seen), Coal Titmouse, Greenfinch, Willow Warbler (I saw several Warblers to-day, and think they must have been this species. They were so restless I could not get a good view of them. I cannot think what else they could have been; they were quite mute); Yellow Bunting (in fine fettle now), Chaffinch, Ring Dove (one fluttered off its nest as we rambled through a copse to-day; what late and early breeders these birds are to be sure), Jay, Jackdaw, Nuthatch (again very prominent. These birds seem to be increasing in the district. Came across five or six altogether; they started calling, and one or two more immediately joined them from the wood on the opposite side of the road), Blackbird, Marsh Titmouse, and Song Thrush. It should be noted that no Swallows or Martins are included in our list. We looked for them in vain to-day.

The light green of the Ash is very noticeable. Many leaves are now fluttering to the ground, especially when the wind blows. Wood Lice crawling across the path of the wayfarer. Bird life much more apparent to-day than for some weeks past, and when a company of Titmice are lighted upon quite a pandemonium is heard. Partook of many luscious Blackberries, and observed a good many Snowberries. Both are well named. The Black Nightshade has finished flowering, and some of the berries are now jet black; the dark red leaves of the Dogwood noticeable, and how interesting to survey the landscape

from some eminence, and notice the lately-erected haystacks, and the farmhouse almost invariably near at hand. The brown haulms of the Potatoes in the fields cannot escape attention, neither the droppings of the Rabbits by the path skirting the field.

Skylarks were continually passing overhead this morning, twittering pleasantly; Jays screaming in the woods frightened a little brown Wren out of its hiding-place in the bracken. Elderberries quite black; Dog's Mercury mostly died right down in the woods. The green seed-pods of the Broad-leaved Helleborine noticed; the contents of the vessel is a pithy, light brown, dust-like composition. The black spots on the Sycamore leaves to be seen; also the white and yellow Hazel leaves in the woods. In the open spots in the woods it is nearly all yellow and brown. in the shady places it is still quite green. The deaf ears and the blind eyes of the unobservant and the uninterested hear and see not the wonders of the country-side. What pleasures they miss! Shakespeare says, and very truly, too, that—

“There are tongues in trees, books in the running brooks,
Sermons in stones, and good in everything.”

Fruit of Spruce Fir growing rapidly; many species of Fungi noticed, and some beautiful Mosses. The Ferns pull up much easier now than a little while back. Walking rapidly along, the gentle wind seemed to force into my mouth an insect of some sort, but I have not yet resorted to an insectivorous diet. The red berries of the Wild Guelder Rose are about now, and also many Small White Butterflies and Grasshoppers still to be seen.

There was a beautiful sunset this evening at six o'clock. Just after that hour, high up in the West, there were clouds of dark grey, with a tinge of mauve colour. Then a very light blue came to view, with a floating island of dark grey again. Then lower and almost on the horizon, a delicious strip of dark pink, and to the left faint orange, producing a beautiful effect, which—so “The Wonderful Century” teaches me—we owe in a great measure to dust!

24th.—Dull and raining. Mostly dull and cheerless all day.

25th.—Bright, with a blue June sky. Heavy dew. Robin and Skylark singing. Still no Swallows or Martins to be seen. Chaffinches “pinking” near the garden. Saw a couple of Barn Owls to-day at the local Taxidermists. He tells me he has more of these birds brought to him than any others. One of the specimens he showed me was an old bird, and had a beautiful speckled breast, and was



MICHAELMAS DAISIES.

very much darker than the other one he had. Three were brought to him in the flesh last week. It is not a pity that these beautiful and useful birds should be destroyed in this manner?

26th.—Bright, but cool winds. Skylark and Robin singing. The song of the former bird much stronger and more sustained. About 90 degrees in the sun at 8.30 a.m. Very blustering South-west winds, and rain at night. Dark and starless.

27th.—Wet all day. The wind which raged last night has broken down a fine clump of beautiful White Dahlias in the garden, although well staked. Lark soaring and singing overhead in spite of the rain and wind.

When at a friend's house not long since, I was shown with pride an old work on Natural History, published in 1790, entitled "A description of a great variety of animals and vegetables extracted from the most considerable writers of 'Natural History,' and adapted to the use of all capacities, especially for the entertainment of youth." It was published in London for D. Steel, at his Navigation Warehouse, Union-row, Tower Hill, price 3s. bound, and the copy before me has stood the test of 110 years wonderfully well. The black and white illustrations of birds, animals, flowers, trees, insects, &c., are many and well produced. The following is an extract from the publishers' announcements:—

"Books printed for D. Steel.—Emblems for the improvement and entertainment of youth, containing emblematical, hieroglyphical, and ænigmatical devices, relating to all parts and stations of life, intended to promote morality, virtue, and religion, and suppress immorality, vice, and prophaneness; by giving useful lessons and admonitions to all ages, degrees, and capacities, suitable to most exigences in common life. . . Contrived not only for study and improvement, but also as play or diversion for youth."

The introduction is also worth quoting. I have inserted the capitals and punctuation marks just as they appear in the book:—

"The Description of Three Hundred Animals, the first Essay of this kind, for the use of young People, having been favourably received, encouraged me to take this Second Collection of Animals and Vegetables, with a Supplemental Part of Curious and uncommon Creatures, which, I Hope, will prove as successful as the former: I have some reason to expect it; because every Invention and Improvement, that tends to delight and please young Persons (that this does so is already manifested by Experience) will undoubtedly be a fresh

Motive to engage their Attention. The Minds of Youth, like their bodily appetites, require to be fed with some suitable Entertainment; the most pleasing things being wont to cloy by long and frequent Use. Natural History is an inexhaustible Subject, which will furnish them with a boundless Variety of Things, fit to exercise their inquisitive minds. And I cannot help thinking that to encourage Youth in reading this Subject, must be of real Benefit, both now and hereafter. It will introduce them into a Habit of Reading, from their natural propensity to view the Pictures, read the Names, and History of the Creatures, &c., which all seem delighted with. But the great and chief Service it will be to them hereafter, is bringing them acquainted with the GREAT CREATOR of all these Things, by contemplating his stupendous Works; It will afford a delightful Satisfaction, to search into Nature, to trace her Footsteps, and the various Methods she takes to bring her Works to Perfection. Indeed, it cannot be expected, that Children can understand these things, or be able to make a right Use of them: But by Tuition, Persons of the lowest Capacity may be made to know, that the Lord made the Earth by his Power, established the World by his Wisdom, and stretched out the Heaven by his Understanding. . . . And that He hath replenished the Earth whereon we dwell, with Variety of Plants, Animals, &c., some for Use, some for Ornament, and some for Delight; which give daily Demonstration of the Wisdom, Power and Goodness of the Maker and Supporter of all these Things.

A new Study seems at first to some Persons hard, intricate, and difficult; but after a little Resolution and Progress, after they become a little acquainted with it, their Understandings are wonderfully cleared up and enlarged, the Difficulties vanish, and the Thing grows easy, familiar, and pleasant. And sure I am, such Studies as these are vastly superior to the Tales, Fables, and Stories of Love, used in Schools, and deserve the regard of Parents and Teachers; as conducing more to the Honour of God, and the real Benefit of Youth."

I was shown a Little Owl just recently shot in the early part of this year at Childwickbury, near St. Albans, Herts. This was what really led to my coming across the old book here referred to. The gentleman who kindly showed me the Owl, told me he had been reading the description given of it in the book under notice, and he was surprised at the accuracy thereof. Here is the description:—

"Fig. 11. Is called the LITTLE OWL. It was taken on the Coast of Ushant by my Brother; it having lost its Way at Sea,

lighting on the Mast of the Ship, was so tired that it suffered itself to be taken without any Resistance, and was preserved and brought home by him, and given to me; and from that Bird this Figure was taken by Mr. Albin. This little Owl was about the bigness of a Blackbird; it weighed three Ounces; its Length, from the Tip of the Beak to the End of the Tail, was seven Inches and a half; Breadth, when the Wings were extended, fourteen Inches; Its Bill was like that of other Owls; the Tongue a little divided, as in the rest of this Tribe; the Ears great, the Eyes lesser than in other Owls. The Wreath or Circle feathers encompassing the Face, beyond the ears



GRAZING ON THE STUBBLES.

less and less discernable; the upper part of the Body was of a dark Brown, with a Mixture of red, having transverse white Spots, intermixed with Lines and small Specks of black; the Feathers about the Ears were more variegated with black and white; the Chin and Belly of a yellowish white; the Breast marked with long dusky Spots, inclosed with a Border of white; Its Wings were prettily chequered with black and white; Its legs feathered down to the Claws; the Feet of a dark yellow; the Claws blackish; It had two fore Toes, and two back Toes."

I notice also that the Avocet is called "The Avosetta," and the

first few lines about this bird read as follows:—"The Avosetta is a bird common at Rome and Venice, and also frequents our Eastern Coasts of Suffolk and Norfolk in Winter time:

The Flamingo is called "The Flammant," and there is a curious plate of a large Spider seizing a Humming Bird. Amongst the fish are included illustrations of the Old Wife Fish, the Old Husband Fish, the Schoolmaster Fish, the Old Pudding Wife Fish, and of the fresh water Perch, it states, "The fresh water Perch is usually small, seldom found as big as a man's hand!" I saw one recently weighing over five pounds, considerably larger than any hand I ever met with!

28th.—Bright morning, nearly 90 degrees in the sun at 8 a.m. Fine all day. Lark and Robin singing. Many of the former still passing over high up in the air, twittering pleasantly. Earwigs still about the house, getting into the hair brushes and other places.

My friend, Mr. John Craig, of Beith, Ayrshire, writes me to-day as under:—"A friend found a Robin's nest containing a clutch of five white eggs this Summer. This is the second Robin's nest we have found with five white eggs. He also found a Yellow Bunting's nest containing five eggs this year. This is only the second Yellow Bunting's nest we have seen containing five eggs in all our experience. Perhaps you will remember the discussion about the number of eggs laid by this bird, which proved that three is the most common number. There was also a discussion as to the usual number of eggs laid by the Robin. One observer said the number was generally four, but I maintained that five and six were the most common numbers. I also saw this year a Blackbird's nest containing seven eggs."

29th.—Bright, after a heavy fog and dew. Like a Spring morning. Skylark and Robin singing. Rooks passing overhead, crying loudly, Chaffinch "pinking" near my garden. How nice a colour the clumps of Pinks assume when the dew is upon the small sword-shaped blades. Noticed a covey of Partridges and a small flock of Lapwings on some ploughed Lands. These we saw from the railway train, and from the same situation observed that most land is ploughed up again. After the rain of the 27th the soil turns up well now.

Mr. W. A. Nicholson, Portobello, M B, writes me as follows, under date of September 28th:—

"The yellow-coloured leaves which are being whirled over moor and dale betray the presence of Autumn with its sometimes dreary weather. Still much work can be done by the Nature-lover, in observing the habits of birds and recording the arrival and departure

of many species at this time. Robins are in full song here, singing very sweetly. In the dark portions of the woods the Blackbird can often be heard uttering its peculiar noise of "chock-chock-chock." The Blue Tit is unusually active, and is busy among the insects. Twittering Swallows have gone, my last date being 20th September. The Common Tern or Sea Swallow has also departed. They have been much shot at, but I am glad to say they have escaped the usual destruction, as persons with guns are becoming fewer here. The weather we are having here is rather nasty; rain, wind, and very cold days being experienced. Occasionally, the glorious sun breaks through a dark, sombre-looking cloud, and cheers us up a bit. I doubt, however, the weather is broken. I cannot say the Summer has been exceptionally good here. North of us some miles, snow has fallen to a depth of several inches."

30th.—Dull and raining slightly early, then bright and warm until mid-day, afterwards rain until 7 o'clock. S.W. winds somewhat strong.

Flowers in bloom:—Scarlet Poppy, Dandelion (more golden and beautiful than ever), Nipplewort, Yarrow (signs of going off apparent now), Scentless Mayweed, Field Thistle, Long-rooted Cat's Ear (in its beauty), Autumnal Hawkbit, Knot Grass, Charlock (whole fields of this are to be seen again now), Sow Thistle, Groundsel, Common Mallow, Red Clover, Bramble (just one or two pieces out only), Purple Medick (what a beautiful colour this flower is when closely examined), Fumitory, Bush Vetch (a solitary piece in flower), Shepherd's Purse, Hedge Parsley, White Dead Nettle, Small Knapweed, Cow Parsnip, Cinquefoil, Heartsease, Chickweed, Upright Meadow Crowfoot, Herb Robert, Agrimony, Lesser Stitchwort, Hedge Bedstraw (just a sprig or two), Prickly-headed Poppy, Wild Carrot (mostly gone off), Harebell, White Clover, Spear-plume Thistle, Hop Trefoil, Toadflax, Field Convolvulus (probably included for the last time), Devil's-bit Scabious (very attractive now), Ragwort (one golden clump only seen), Hedge Mustard, Germander Speedwell, Hedge Calamint, Self Heal, Daisy (very few in flower), and Field Scabious. Our list is decreasing rapidly now; it hardly numbers fifty species.

Birds singing: Skylark and Robin.

Birds seen or heard:—Rook (very noisy quite early this morning), Starling (a flock seen, and as against the blue sky they could be watched for some time. Now they are together, now opening out,

now swerving to the right, now circling round, now closing again, now shooting straight like an arrow, now breaking up in little companies and settling on the ploughed lands in the distance. It is wonderfully interesting to watch from some eminence a flock of birds, and to follow them as far as the eye, or the field glasses, can reach), House Sparrow (in very large flocks now), House Martin, Nuthatch, Greenfinch (about a dozen seen together), Swallow (saw quite a number of these birds and Martins still skimming and hovering over the green meadows. I wonder how much longer they will be with us this year), Chaffinch, and Blackbird. Owing to the blustering winds it was impossible to hear many birds this morning; indeed, bird life was not very evident



- YOUNG ENGLANDERS.

at all, and we did not ramble through the woods to-day where we generally find the Titmice, Creepers, Woodpeckers, &c.; hence our list is somewhat restricted.

Grasshoppers still jumping about everywhere. The dark purple leaves of the Dogwood very prominent along the hedgerows. The Acorns are ripe, and are falling rapidly; what striking evidence that Autumn is upon us. The Horse Chestnuts, too, are ripe, and a similar remark applies to them as to the Acorns.

The blustering winds seem to foretell wintry weather, and that the Summer has really passed and gone. It is hard to realise, but it is so.

The rarer Maple is shedding its rich, brown leaves upon the pathway. The light green flower heads of the Ivy contrast pleasingly with the dark shining leaves. Hops ripe, and how graceful they trail along the hedgerows; they are not cultivated in this district.

How pleasing to stand outside the village church and listen to the singing. It is mostly amateur, but it is sweet and beautiful. We prefer it to the highest-paid professionals in the land, and nothing pleases us more than to listen to the villagers chanting their praises; to the village schoolmaster playing the mellow organ, and to the village choirboys singing an anthem of praise for the harvest home. It is all very beautiful because everything around is so quiet and rural, and the service so simple. Perchance in the churchyard a sweet-voiced Robin sings, and over the square church tower we observe a soaring Lark. It is indeed a beautiful and inspiring scene in which to participate. The joys of English country life and pursuits know no bounds. Hard by is the Rector's residence. What opportunities he has for Natural History studies; but how few take advantage of them.

The brilliant red seeds of the Cuckoo Pint still conspicuous on the hedge banks; also the necklets of Bryony berries along the hedgerows.

Came across a field dotted all over with the dark violet of the Devil's-bit Scabious, the white of the Yarrow, and the golden of the Nippewort and the Autumnal Hawkbit. The effect was very charming.

Passing through the village, some of the rosy-cheeked children were singing "Pass the hat for your credit's sake, and pay, pay, pay!" I wondered when I heard their innocent little voices if they had ever seen a real soldier, or could realise in the faintest degree the meaning of the lines they uttered with such evident self-satisfaction.

Found a Hedgehog's skin, which reminds me of Buckland's anecdote of one he had in his garden being attacked by an Eagle and killed, the bird also being one of his pets. It seems almost impossible for a Hedgehog to be tackled by a bird, for it is such a bristly, awkward customer to deal with; but Buckland's word is too good to be doubted.

Several Small White Butterflies out, and also saw one or two sparkling little Coppers.

Leaves of the Garlic Mustard very prominent now.

Picked up a Red Admiral Butterfly; it offered no resistance. What a beautiful creature when closely examined! The blackish wings with the black and white fringes, the broad red band in the fore wings, and the red edging on the hind wings, spotted with black, very delicate.

Thus finishes September. What a lovely month it has been; almost continual sunshine. We have had only one wet day, and it has been one of the very best months in the year. Now for October!

OCTOBER.



STILL WATERS.

OCTOBER.

"Barred clouds bloom the soft dying day,
And touch the stubble plains with rosy hue."

1st.—Like a Spring morning. Bright; 90 degrees in the sun at 8 a.m. Lark and Robin singing. Blue Titmouse appeared on the garden fence, and looked anxiously to where we hang the meat bones during the Winter time. Saw a Swallow.

2nd.—Bright and beautiful. Chaffinch "pinking," Robin and Lark singing. I was talking to an old Sportsman-Naturalist to-day, and he kindly gave me the following information:—Flocks, or companies, of the birds named below are called—

A whisp of Snipe.

A gaggle of Geese (wild).

A skein of Swans (wild).

A leash of Pheasants (three only).

A neine of Pheasants (more than three).

A covey of Partridges.

A flock of Ducks (wild).

A pack of Grouse.

Are not these names interesting and curious?

3rd.—Bright, but chill October air. Much colder. Robin and Lark singing, but the latter seemed to be at a tremendous height in the air. I am continually hearing them now, but can rarely see them. A Starling came over the garden this morning, then hovered and made a sweep for all the world like a Hawk. I know not what it struck at and captured, but it seemed to be a large insect of some kind.

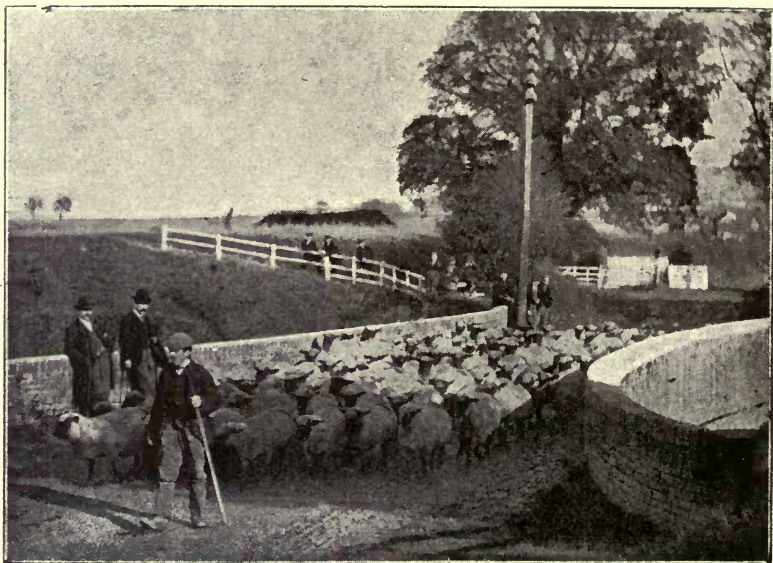
Clear moonlight night.

4th.—Bright, but cold, cutting winds; later, driving, heavy rains. Lark singing.

5th.—Bright; again 90 degrees in the sun. Good deal of changeable winds. Some Primroses out in flower in the garden. More rain.

The Cuckoo has been known to place its egg in the nests of over 100 species of birds, and at a meeting of the British Ornithologists Club held on March 18, 1896, an exhibition of Cuckoos' eggs and those of the foster parents was held, and the following list, prepared by Mr. E. Bidwell, was laid before the meeting:—

List of Western Palæarctic species in the nests of which the Cuckoo's egg has been found:—Mistle Thrush, Song Thrush, Fieldfare, Blackbird, Ring Ouzel, Rock Thrush, Wheatear, Isabelline Wheatear, Black-throated Wheatear, Eastern Black-throated Chat, Eared Wheatear, Eastern Pied Wheatear, Whinchat, Stonechat



LEADING HIS FLOCK.

White-tailed Stonechat, Redstart, Black Redstart, Blue-throat, White-spotted Bluethroat, Redbreast, Nightingale, Thrush-Nightingale, White-throat, Lesser Whitethroat, Black-headed Warbler, Orphean Warbler, Blackcap, Garden Warbler, Subalpine Warbler, Spectacled Warbler, Barred Warbler, Dartford Warbler, Golden-crested Wren, Fire-crested Wren, Chiff Chaff, Willow Wren, Bonelli's Warbler, Wood Wren. Grey-tailed Warbler, Icterine Warbler, Melodious Warbler, Booted Warbler, Reed Warbler, Marsh Warbler, Great Reed Warbler,

Sedge Warbler, Aquatic Warbler, Paddy Field Warbler, Grasshopper Warbler, River Warbler, Cetti's Warbler, Hedge Sparrow, Alpine Accentor, Dipper, Great Titmouse, Wren, Tree Creeper, Pied Wagtail, White Wagtail, Grey Wagtail, Blue-headed Wagtail, Black-headed Yellow Wagtail, Yellow Wagtail, Tree Pipit, Meadow Pipit, Red-throated Pipit, Tawny Pipit, Richard's Pipit, Water Pipit, Rock Pipit, Golden Oriole, Great Grey Shrike, Lesser Grey Shrike, Isabelline Shrike, Red-backed Shrike, Woodchat, Spotted Flycatcher, Pied Flycatcher, Swallow, Martin, Greenfinch, Hawfinch, Goldfinch, Serin, House Sparrow, Tree Sparrow, Chaffinch, Brambling, Snowfinch, Linnet, Mealy Redpoll, Lesser Redpoll, Twite, Bullfinch, Northern Bullfinch, Black-headed Bunting, Corn Bunting, Yellow Bunting, Meadow Bunting, Cirl Bunting, Yellow-breasted Bunting, Ortolan, Reed Bunting, Lapland Bunting, Starling, Jay, Magpie, Jackdaw, Skylark, Woodlark, Crested Tit, Short-toed Lark, White-winged Lark, Desert Lark, Green Woodpecker, Ring Dove, Stock Dove, Turtle Dove, and Little Grebe. One hundred and nineteen species in all.

DOES IVY INJURE TREES?—This is a question I would very much like answered by some practical authority, because in some districts where the Ivy has been allowed a free course one suddenly sees the whole lot cut down, and the dead and decaying leaves do not by any means improve the appearance of the trees. It does not appear to me that trees are injured by the Ivy growing up them, for it merely adheres to the bark and does not cling round it to such an extent as to injure the growth of the tree. If it is not this, then what is the reason that some landowners have such a hatred of the evergreen? Does it make the bark or tree less saleable, or does it harbour insects which are injurious to the tree? Let us have this matter cleared up satisfactorily, so that if it is proved beyond doubt that the tree does not suffer, we may, as Selbornians and lovers of Nature and the country, endeavour to get preserved those trees on which the plant is found growing.

6th.—Cold and blustering winds, showery, bright between.

Red Admiral Butterfly in the garden. A Camberwell Beauty Butterfly was caught in one of the rooms at the Board School here this week.

How the Lark cleaves the air, especially when looked at through a pair of good glasses. It always seems to soar and sing with its head to the wind. Is it not interesting to watch it soaring upward? Taking the glass from the eye the observer can scarcely see the

blithe bird with the naked eye, as it towers higher and higher until lost in the blue clouds. Then it suddenly commences the descent, falling slowly, slowly, slowly, until finally it drops like a stone to the earth in a slanting direction. It is a wonderfully captivating and interesting sight, and one not easily forgotten.

At a friend's house this evening I noticed quite a bunch of berries of the Wild Guelder Rose, or Wayfaring Tree, in a vase on the shelf. They looked just like wax, but they were, I am pleased to say, produce from Nature's own bountiful garden. The wine-red leaves, too, are worthy of notice.



GARDEN SPIDER.

7th—Bright but breezy; S.W. winds. Like a Midsummer day almost. The most glorious Summer and Autumn I ever remember in my limited experience, for be it known, gentle reader, the writer of these notes has only reached twenty-eight summers.

Flowers in bloom:—Charlock Dandelion, Shepherd's Purse, Knot Grass, Scentless Mayweed, Nipplewort, Creeping Crowfoot, Sow

Thistle (nearly run its flowering course), White and Red Clovers, Field Thistle, Groundsel, Red Dead Nettle, Autumnal Hawkbit (going to seed), Long-rooted Cat's Ear (the Cat's-ear-shaped leaves very prominent now), Dove's-foot Crane's Bill (not in flower to any extent), Black Horehound (the rains have brought this into flower again), White Dead Nettle, Ragwort, Fumitory (quite a quantity in flower once more), Germander Speedwell, Heartsease, Chickweed, Yarrow, Scarlet Poppy, Wild Carrot, Harebell, Field Scabious, Herb Robert, Cinquefoil, Hedge Calamint, Hedge Mustard, Prickly-headed Poppy, Marsh Mallow, Cow Parsnip, Small Knapweed (very little in flower now), Common Mallow, Scarlet Pimpernel, and Purple Medick (probably the last time of inclusion as in flower).

Birds singing:—Robin and Skylark. The latter almost everywhere, the former hardly so much in evidence as of late. In every direction, at every turn, Larks were to be seen and heard; it has been a day of local Lark song.

Birds seen or heard:—Swallow, House Martin (a good many of these two species still here, the former busy skimming over the



FUNGI I.

of these two species still here, the former busy skimming over the meadows, the latter hunting higher in the air than its near relation), House Sparrow, Pied Wagtail (several went overhead, calling as usual), Starling (quite the most prominent bird about to-day. Many were bathing in the road puddles, then basking in the sunlight. They almost threw off their temerity, and allowed me to get quite close to them. A great many large flocks of these interesting birds also seen. Just now there is a greyish tinge on the breast). Rook (spotted them early this morning careering over the tops of their nest trees; now circling, now falling, then all off to their feeding grounds), Partridge (several birds flushed), Lapwing (twos and threes, and a flock of about fifty also seen. How pleasant to watch them through a good glass, now seeing the dark back, now the snow-white breast, and to watch their graceful flight), Yellow Bunting (put up a small flock of these birds. They all flew into some Oak trees, and we soon sighted them with our binoculars. The sun shining brightly on their beautiful yellow and green plumage was a grand sight in which to participate. Two or three were preening their feathers, and very beautiful was the effect), Sparrow Hawk (it is some weeks since I saw one of these birds, and it pleased me greatly to observe one to-day making his way from the woods in the East. A flock of Lapwings preceded him, but they seemed to take no notice of the Hawk. Watching him through that indispensable pair of glasses, we notice that every few yards he shoots straight along with motionless wings, then opens out again. He has kept fairly straight up to now, and steered a clear course, but now he is bearing considerably to the left, and he doubtless saw with those wonderful eyes of his something which might interest him. He is right over a hedge now—it has been entirely open country up to this juncture—and still watching, we see a flock of small birds rise as in a cloud, then scatter in all directions. The Hawk does not dash at any of them, and is then lost to view behind a clump of tall trees in the South-west. When I had finished watching this performance my eyes were quite dazzled—we had followed the bold bird for some miles; and here we finish our ill-constructed Hawk notes), and Meadow Pipit (now this is the second occasion only on which I have had the satisfaction of noting this very interesting bird in this district. To-day I was attracted by their crescendo notes uttered as they rise on the wing, something like “tu-wheet, tu-wheet.” They were on some ploughed land, mixing up freely with the Skylarks, and looked very engaging and pretty as they ran over the tops of the newly-upturned earth. There were perhaps a score of them all told, and those I had a good sight

of seemed in beautiful plumage. As compared with the Lark they are very much darker, and, of course, not nearly so large).

The Bees and Insects are very busy round the flowers of the Ivy. How they love the flowers of the Ivy in the Autumn and the flowers of the Sallow in the Spring

Noticed a very large dark green Dragon Fly out to-day, also several Small Tortoiseshell Butterflies, and also Small Whites, and I have seen more Red Admirals to-day than at any other time this year.

The berries of the Holly are a bright red, and the dead keys of the rarer Maple are noticeable now that the leaves on this tree have mostly fallen. It has now lost its beauty. A few Grasshoppers still to be heard. The woods after the rains are still bright and green, and Autumn in many places seems a long way off. The low-cut hedges, however, remind us of Winter, although the brilliant sun and the warm atmosphere seems to take our thoughts Summer-wards. Many small Flies out. Bees on the Michaelmas Daisies in the garden, and also some very bright green Flies, very beautiful indeed. Also noticed a very large Spider, who seemed to have a sort of emergency web to run to in case of difficulty.

I have a splendid show of Nasturtiums in the garden now, the scarlets and yellows making a very brave show, together with the snow white of the Japanese Anemones. The scarlet berries of the Bryony seem more prominent than ever now that the foliage has died down, and the Haws are assuming a darker tint. The Bracken is still green, though underneath traces of browning are noticeable.

That barren-looking ploughed field I was writing about a few weeks since has once more become a transformation scene, for the whole is now covered with little fresh green blades, and will some day yield a crop of Oats. How quickly it has come through, to be sure

The brilliant sun had only set about an hour in the West when the silver moon rose in the East, and being so bright and full specially attracted our attention.

8th.—Heavy dew, but a beautiful bright morning. Heat almost tropical; 75 degrees in the shade; 14 above the average for the time of year. No day as late as the 8th October has been as warm as to day during the last forty years, whilst the records for the past sixty years only show one day as warm so late in the Autumn, and that day, curious to relate, was also on the 8th October.

Skylark singing. House Sparrows very noisy. If this weather continues, surely the birds will begin to think of nesting again!

9th.—Very misty early, but afterwards as yesterday; almost identical temperature. Topcoats have all been discarded again, and yet last week we were only too glad to don them. Hedge Sparrows in the garden, hopping about in their perky, sprightly manner, and uttering all the time a monotonous double note, something like the "pink, pink" of the Chaffinch, but not nearly so musical or shrill. Robin singing.

10th.—Much cooler, but fine and bright. Hedge Sparrows still noisy in the garden. Robin and Lark singing. Two or three Carrion Crows went over cawing loudly.

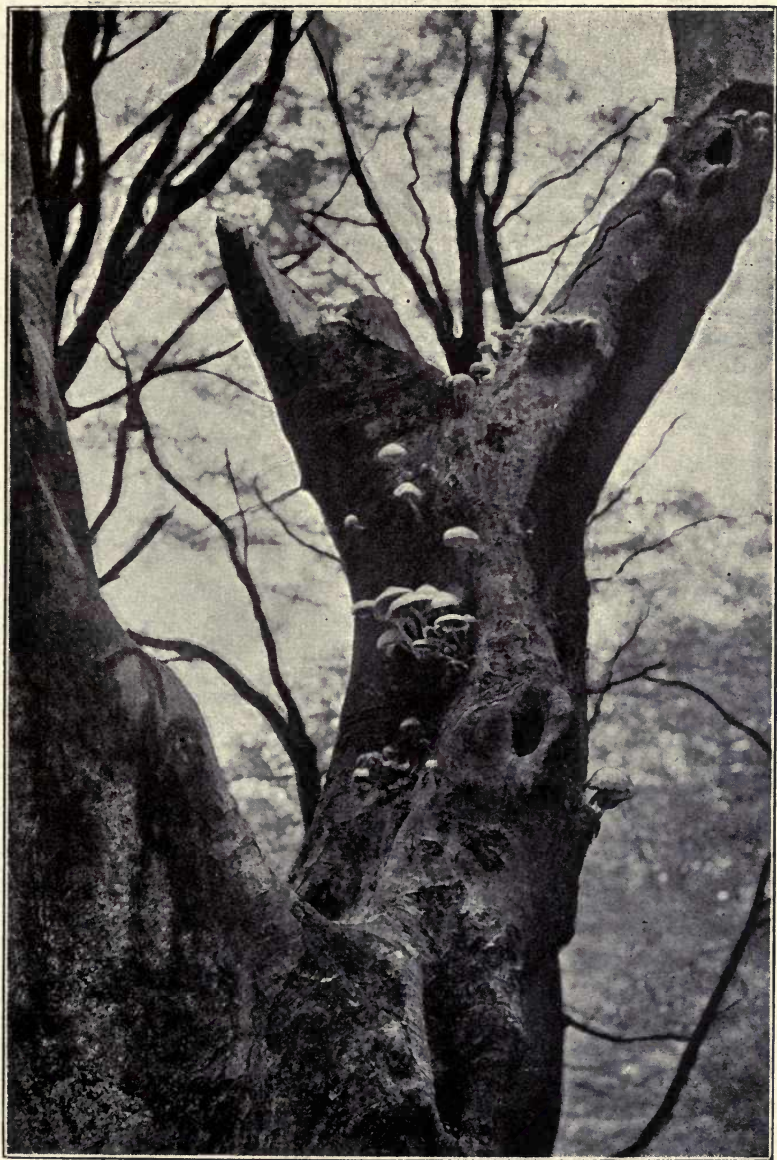
I picked a House Fly out of a jug of milk to-day, and watched how wonderfully the minute creature cleaned itself. A small particle of some sort adhered to one of its legs, and it tried all ways and means to dislodge it. It in some extraordinary way or other managed to get each of its front and side legs cleaned by dragging one leg down another, and it at last succeeded in freeing the impeded one. I have never before been so interested in a Fly nor realised what intelligent creatures they are.

A keeper writes me to-day about some albino Song Thrushes he once found. They were taken about thirty years ago from Zouches Farm, near Dunstable, Beds. There were five young in the nest, three being the normal colour and the remaining two albinos. Both had pink eyes, one was pure white, and the other had a cream band round its neck. They never kept their head feathers long, appearing to be constantly moulting at this particular part. They lived just over two years, and would have been preserved but for the fact that they were bald on the head when they died.

11th.—Bright, but much colder. Between 60 and 70 degrees in the sun. Larks singing and soaring all round. House Sparrows still carrying feathers about, apparently for nesting purposes.

12th.—Beautiful October weather; much more seasonable than early in the week. Bright and fine. Hedge Sparrows prominent near my garden. Rooks passing overhead early. Robin and Lark singing continuously.

Just at this season the casual observer considers there is little to interest and amuse, but the practical observer knows different. The Autumn tints are beautiful; the Summer dresses are being thrown off, and the garb of Winter donned. For every leaf that falls a new bud is forming, or formed, and those who study Nature in Summer and



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Winter, by day, and oftentimes at night, always look forward in joy and hope when they see the Summer mansions toppling to the ground. Most of the wild flowers have run their course, though the golden of the Nipplewort, the Long-rooted Cat's Ear, and the Autumnal Hawk-bit makes a brave show still, as also the snow-white and delicate pink of the Yarrow. A stray Red Admiral or sparkling little Copper Butterfly may perchance be seen, but bird life seems to be much more prominent than for some weeks past. Can you walk along without listening with pleasure to that sweet-toned Lark? Do you not see that flock of Starlings (which Gilbert White used to call "Stares") in the distance? Did you not catch a glimpse of that ochre-breasted Nuthatch coming down that fine Oak tree head foremost? The sights and sounds are so many we hardly know which way to turn for fear of missing some interesting creature. Just look at that busy company of Titmice engaged in yonder Fir spinney. Notice the Long-tailed species, closely observe what fine fettle the Coal Tit is in, as also the Great Tit or Oxeve. You must surely hear that Robin singing, and cannot fail to see that flock of snow-breasted Lapwings going overhead! Look at that little Tree Creeper scampering round the bark of that silver-lichened Oak, and bring your glasses on that flock of Rooks engaged in dibbing operations in that newly-ploughed field. Are not they busy, searching for the destructive Wireworm? We see not one-hundredth part of what is going on in Nature, but by keeping our eyes and ears open, we may observe and hear sufficient to assure us that during October—as well as every other part of the year—we may make many interesting and original Nature notes.

13th.—Still cold; not so bright, but perfect October weather; S.W. winds. Skylark singing Hedge Sparrows and House Sparrows noisy in the garden. Whilst digging I turned up a Cocktail. What a curious creature this is! There is a very marked change in the foliage this last two or three days, and the leaves are turning colour very fast and falling rapidly. It is quite a transformation scene from a few days ago.

Few people, perhaps, know the value of dust. I have just finished reading Alfred Russell Wallace's wonderful book, "The Wonderful Century." Shortly summarised, Mr. Wallace says that we owe to the universality of dust, the pure blue of the sky, the glories of sunset and sunrise, and diffused daylight or skylight. A dust-free atmosphere would banish clouds or mist, or the "gentle rain from heaven," and in its place we should have perpetual sunshine, desert lowlands, and

mountains devastated by unceasing floods and raging torrents, so as, apparently, to render all life on the earth impossible. Generally, half the beauty of the world would vanish with the absence of dust. Is not this a perfect revelation?

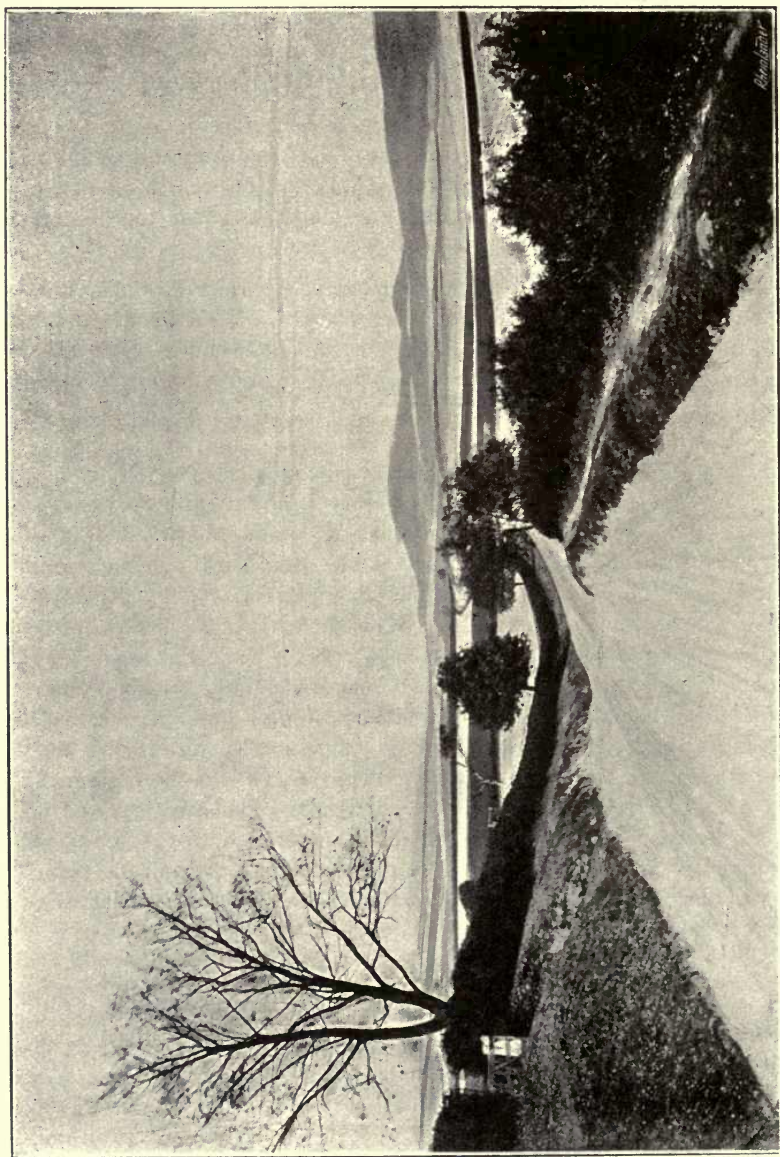
14th.—Unsettled weather; very blustering winds; showery; extremely cold in spite of bright sunshine.

We rambled to-day on the borders of Hertfordshire and Bedfordshire, over one range of the breezy Chiltern Hills, and most of the notes which are included under to-day's date occurred on the borders of the two counties.

Flowers found in bloom:—Yarrow, Long-rooted Cat's Ear, Nipplewort, Shepherd's Purse (now we found some seed-pods of this plant to-day which seemed to us almost phenomenal in size; they were quite as large as a brace button; the largest we ever saw), Scentless Mayweed, Tansy, Sow Thistle, White Dead Nettle, Groundsel, Knot Grass, Hedge Mustard, Hop Trefoil, Ragwort, Scarlet Poppy, Shepherd's Needle (it is months since we found this in flower, and it was, indeed, a pleasurable surprise to come across a good deal to-day in flower and needled), Dandelion, Small Knapweed, Charlock (whole golden fields of this are now to be seen), Rest Harrow, Cinquefoil, Bramble, Wild Carrot (near at home this plant is rapidly going off flower; where we rambled to-day it is at its height), Germander Speedwell, Self Heal, Field Thistle, Marjoram (the first time this flower has been included in our lists), White Campion, Prickly-headed Poppy, Cow Parsnip, Red Clover, Field Scabious, Sainfoin, Toadflax, Creeping Crowfoot, Ox Tongue, Wild Mignonette, and last, but not least, Succory. The latter is a very delicate pale blue flower, something after the style of the Mallow. It is also called Chicory, and it is from the roots of the same, when dried and ground, that the Chicory of commerce is obtained. It is also interesting to note that the plant is used abroad for fodder for Cattle and Sheep. It is also the first time this plant has been included in our lists.

Birds singing:—Owing to the blustering winds it was impossible to hear hardly any birds, and the only one heard singing was the Skylark. He, blithe bird, was up aloft with his head to the breeze singing gaily that captivating song.

Birds heard or seen:—Carrion Crow, House Sparrow, Partridge Blackbird, Kestrel (saw one of these beautiful Hawks strung up on the keeper's cursed gibbet. The bird had been caught a day or two previously in one of those barbarous pole-traps. I tried to convince



AT THE FOOT OF THE CHALKY "CHILTERNS."

my friend—who was not the gamekeeper but the river-keeper—of the good the bird does during the greater part of the year, but I am afraid all my arguments were futile), Pied Wagtail (several rather noisy on the ploughed lands), Ring Dove (the most prominent bird to-day; present in hundreds. Beech trees abound here; they are very fond of the fruit), Yellow Bunting, Bullfinch (hereby hangs a tale. The rural policeman and the keeper were both very anxious for me to see “the white birds that be flying about this last two months,” and we repaired to a waste thickly planted with Hawthorns and Briars, bordering a wood. It was here these white birds had been seen, and I must see them. We searched through the bushes in vain, and had almost given up the hunt when, sure enough, a pure white bird flew across the path in front of us. I stalked it carefully, and with the aid of my powerful binoculars I identified the bird pretty satisfactorily as an albino variety of the more generally rosy-breasted Bullfinch. The bird was very restless, and did not expose itself for more than a minute or two, but it was a picture in its absolute snowy whiteness. I am told that a nest of albino Bullfinches was taken near this locality some years ago, and a white Linnet quite recently); Wild Duck (some hundreds seen on the lake), Teal (we put up three as we were rambling by the water), Mute Swan (a score or so on the lake), Chinese Geese (a pair of these birds observed; they seemed very tame; they are really a very beautifully-marked Goose), Kingfisher (had the pleasure of watching one of these birds fishing. We happened to be in the boathouse, and he was perched on an iron fence which runs into the water some yards. We were only about a dozen yards from him, so had a good view. How quick he is, to be sure; down and up again in much less time than it takes to tell the tale, then off right down the water, never flying very high, and then alighting at another favourite vantage ground), Moorhen (a good many dishing about in the tall rushes fringing the lake), Lapwing (several put up in the moist meadows, a favourite haunt, too, of the Snipe), Rook (in large flocks), and Chaffinch.

The ground is now strewn with the fallen fruits of the Horse Chestnut, the Beech, and the Acorn. We meet some boys gathering the former, and as they see our friend the policeman approaching, they scamper for their very lives, leaving all their gathered “conquers” in the roadway. The policeman tells us they had as much right to pick up the fallen fruit as he has, and called the fellows a pack of fools for taking the trouble to pick up the Chestnuts and then run away and leave them!

How wonderful the tints are on the creepers—the *Ampelopsis Veitchii*, for instance. Some are a delicate red, others are dark purple, and as these cling closely to the wall the effect is very striking. Just now they are in their gayest robes of beauty and attractiveness.

Has the reader ever noticed the table-like shape of the small trees and shrubs on the railway banks? I think the platelayers and other men engaged on the line and banks must twist the branches into the shapes one notices. Now is the season of the sere and yellow leaf; the Oak is quite stripped in places.



ANOTHER MEMENTO OF THE GREAT FRUIT CROP OF 1900.

Passing by one of the common lands of England this morning, I fervently wished that the hand of the speculative builder would be stayed, and the people's own held in trust for them for many generations to come.

The Traveller's Joy tree is all bearded now. The "bloom" on the Blackthorn stems very noticeable; also the beautiful tints and colours on the Colewort.

On two or three vermin poles we saw a good many Stoats and Weasels, and coming round a bend in the wood on to the top of a commanding hill had a splendid view of Strawopolis.

We had a great treat in the boathouse on the estate we visited, and in the glass cases all round the far too damp walls noticed the following Natural History specimens:—Snowy Owl, Laughing Jackass, Black Swan, Pochard, Roach (largest one weighing 3lbs. 6ozs.), Badger (weight 28lbs.), Goldeneye Duck, a pair of Otters, Peregrine Falcon, a pair of Golden Pheasants (shot wild in a neighbouring wood), several albino varieties of the English Pheasant, several Pike (the two largest 38lbs. and 32lbs. respectively), a pair of Red-legged Partridges, Golden Eagle, Mute Swan, pair of Eider Ducks, and a Heron. Here was quite a little museum, and the collection interested us not a little. None of the specimens were labelled, and I had the pleasure of identifying some of them for the first time. Most of the British birds and fish and animals were obtained in the neighbourhood (the Pochard breeds there), but the Snowy Owl, the Jackass, and other foreigners were obtained elsewhere.

Glancing in the water for a sight of a good fish or two we spotted a fine drove of Roach, each, I should say, over a pound in weight their red tails and fins being very prominent. We also sighted a long, thin Pike, looking very sickly, and evidently on his last legs, though that expression, to say the least of it, is rather a curious one to use in connection with a fish, but it is none the less understandable. If in condition it should have weighed several pounds: it probably would not have turned the scale at three.

I was told to-day by the keeper's homely wife that the Rooks are building in the high trees adjoining the lodge. Also, that if one does not shoot the young Rooks the parent birds will forsake the neighbourhood. This appears to me to be very far-fetched, but I record it for what it may be worth. The Bullfinch kept by the keeper will "talk" to nobody else but him, and with the remark that he tells us that in the early Autumn of last year (1899) some hundreds of Swallows and Martins died on his and the neighbouring lodge doorsteps owing (apparently) to sudden cold weather, our notes for to-day are brought to a conclusion.

15th.—Brilliant sunshine; between 70 and 80 degrees in the sun. Lark singing, Hedge Sparrows and Robin in vocal competition in the garden. Still piercing cold and blustering winds.

The Butterfly notes for the closing three months of the year may

here be mentioned. In October—that is if it be fine and warm—some of the following species may be observed: Pale Clouded Yellow, Clouded Yellow, Brimstone, Comma, Large Tortoiseshell, Small Tortoiseshell, Peacock, Red Admiral, Painted Lady, Brown Hairstreak, Small Copper, Common Blue, and Adonis Blue. In November and December Butterflies are met with very rarely, but on fine, warm days some of the hibernating specimens may be seen, probably those given in our notes at the early part of the year.* Thus, for the present at least, our Butterfly notes draw to a close.

16th.—Wind dropped. Bright, beautiful morning. House Sparrows quarrelling and fighting on the house tops. Hedge Sparrows still about the garden; some singing. Skylark singing. The Robin seems rather silent just lately.

17th.—Raining. Chaffinch “pinking” near the garden, and some Starlings paid us a visit. Lark singing.

18th.—Bright, and not nearly so cold. Skylark, Robin, and Hedge Sparrow singing.

19th.—Bright, but cold winds. Starlings “singing,” also Robin and Lark. Chaffinch noisy.

Lord Avebury, writing to me to-day as to my book, “A Year with Nature,” included in which is an illustrated article on Birds’ Beaks, says: “In the part on ‘bills,’ you omit the New Zealand Hina, the only case I know where the male and female have bills of a different shape.”

At this season Longfellow’s lines are worth repeating:—

“There is a beautiful spirit breathing now
Its mellow richness on the clustered trees;
And, from a beaker full of richer dyes
Pouring new glory on the Autumn woods.”

20th.—Cold, but fine. Robin and Lark singing. Very large flocks of House Sparrows on some waste ground in front of my house feeding on Thistle and other obnoxious and hurtful weed seeds.

21st.—Bright, but cold early; heavy rains later.

Flowers in bloom.—Ragwort, Long-rooted Cat’s Ear, Nipplewort, Yarrow, Groundsel, Scentless Mayweed, Shepherd’s Purse, Red Dead Nettle, Charlock, Dandelion, White Campion, Hop Trefoil, Red Clover, White Clover, Field Scabious (quite as prominent now as ever it was), Fool’s Parsley, Germander Speedwell, Creeping Crow-foot (just a flower or two lingers on), Sow Thistle, Heartsease, Self

* I saw a Small Tortoiseshell Butterfly to-day, December 13th, 1902.



THATCHING.

Heal, Wild Carrot, Cow Parsnip, Knot Grass, Oxeye Daisy (only a couple seen in flower), Small Knapweed, Hedge Bedstraw, Spear-plume Thistle, Ox Tongue, Corn Sow Thistle, Goosegrass, Autumnal Hawkbit, Scarlet Poppy, Honeysuckle, and Bramble (surely very late).

Birds singing.—Robin and Skylark, the former more conspicuous than recently.

Birds seen or heard:—House Sparrow (a row of over thirty on the garden fence looked very curious this morning), Starling (large flocks; how light the under plumage seems to be at this season), Rook, Chaffinch (small flock of females seen), Hedge Sparrow, Black-bird, Nuthatch (watched several of these birds to-day; how interesting to watch them coming down a tree head foremost, then uttering the human-like whistle), Jay (several shrieking in the woods), Bullfinch, Ring Dove, Great Tit (busy searching for insects, &c., in the tree tops; now underneath, now on top, now swinging, now jerking), Song Thrush, Lapwing (a large flock of these birds and Starlings in a Potato field. These two birds seem to cog in very well together, and the former, as seen through a pair of good glasses, look a picture in their snowy breasts and engaging manners. The field had been cleared of its crop, and the Potatoes were stored away in straw stacks over 100 yards in length. What a fine store! The birds must have been after grubs, and they seemed to be having a right royal feast).

The N.W. winds to-day were very cold, and it is difficult now to write comfortably when out. Is it not comforting to get out of the open and round a bend in the wood where it is sheltered! One may now hear dead and decaying branches tinkling to the ground. The pathways are becoming strewn with leaves and Acorns. At times nought can be heard but the sighing of the wind, then one hears the song of a Robin or a soaring Lark. Down the old lanes it is getting very moist now, and the leaves of the Wild Cherry have assumed quite a dark tint.

If one wishes to find wild flowers, obviously the best place is to go to the nearest rubbish heap or piece of waste ground. It is really astonishing the varieties one may stumble across in these situations.

The dead bunches of keys on the Ash very noticeable, although the tree still retains its colour and foliage pretty well.

Noticed a clump of golden Marigolds at the country railway station. The botanical studies at such a place are often many and interesting.

Along the hedgerows now it is mostly light and dark green, but here and there a patch of golden, brown, yellow, and reddish meets the eye. The Nightshade berries still attract our attention, and the indescribable beauty of some the Maple trees can only receive a passing reference. One special mass to-day was a picture of yellow and burnished gold—such a study for an artist's brush.

The purple leaves of the Dogwood are still so noticeable that mention must be made of them; also the dark berries. The leaves are fluttering through the air continuously now, and stooping to pick up a finely-tinted Bramble leaf we observe a Ladybird out and about. Useful creatures these! By the lake are many Chestnut trees. They are fast shedding their Summer dresses, and the surface of the water is leaf-strewn. The Chestnut leaves are curling, and are quite brown.

One pair of Grasshoppers seen. The Mangolds look very healthy. Blackberries are so plentiful that they are selling at 1¼d. per lb. Thus our communings with Nature again conclude.

22nd.—Cold, but bright. Skylark singing. I was reading to-day the letters of Thomas Edward Brown, the author of "Fo'c'sle Yarns," and his love for Nature is admirably depicted in the following lines:—"And surely this sweet blue is the very life of the intellect. . . That a Blackbird should pipe may be well borne, and I swear to you (imagine some ethereal Bird-of-Paradise oath) that there is nothing else. The sky is hung over this place by a most delicate diamond boss at the zenith, and, believe me! it all swims in silent blue music. . . . It is 11.45 a.m. A Rook has just flown past; as he did so, he cawed. From his black wings dripped the almost clinging blue."

23rd.—Fine and bright, after opening rather misty and November-like. Skylark, Hedge Sparrow, and Robin singing.

Back in the Summer I noticed on my Apple trees and Rose bushes that, besides being swarmed with Green Fly, many Ants were present. I could not account for this at the time, but now I learn that the wise Ants were after the thick sugary liquid which the Aphis pours out, called honeydew. The Ants, it is stated, actually tap an Aphis with their feelers, and if the Fly has not been "milked," there immediately oozes out a drop of the liquid which the Ants so dearly love.

24th.—Dull and Scotch misty; close. Skylark singing sweetly.

25th.—Close and dull. Chaffinch noisy in the garden.

26th.—Dull: colder. Rain towards afternoon. Very starry night.

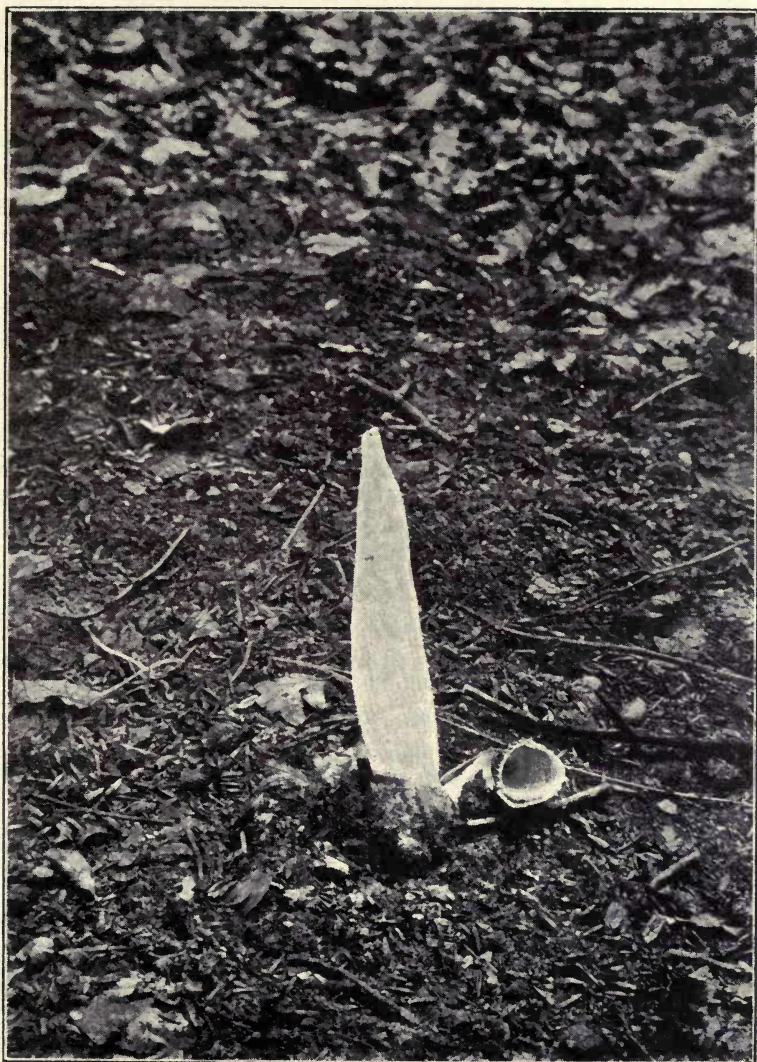
From an issue of a local paper bearing the date of March 20th, 1880, I cull the following:—"The late severe Winter appers to have driven inland many aquatic birds. In January last a pair of Canvas Blue Ducks or Pochards, were shot in Hyde Wood, near Bushey, and also three Common Gulls (*Larus canus*). In December last a very fine male specimen of the Tufted Duck was shot at Nash Mills, near Watford; and in January last, on the Willesden Reservoir, near Tring, a female specimen of the pretty little bird the White-headed or Dwarf Goosander, or Hooded Merganser (*Mergus cucullatus*) was shot by Mr. F. G. Muntion."

In the North of our island snow has fallen, and the question arises as to the prospects for the fast approaching Winter. If the abundance of berries is a guide, we are, indeed, in for a severely hard season; but as we have had an exceptionally dry and hot Summer, we may, perhaps, be allowed to follow the dear old Selborne patriarch, whose memory will ever be cherished. Gilbert White held that, after a dry Summer, a cold Winter was extremely unlikely, and that an exceptionally cold and severe Winter only follows after a very wet Summer. Of course we shall see what we shall see.

Just now the Skylark and the Robin are in full song, and occasionally the cheery little Hedge Accentor chimes up. But what a monotonous note the latter utters at this season, irrespective of the song, of course. It is something like the "pink, pink" of the gaily-plumed Chaffinch, but not nearly so shrill or metallic. The Nuthatch is especially noisy at this season, and the Starlings, although mostly in large flocks, find time to indulge in a wonderful concert of their own as they perch on the chimney pots, rough and ready.

Several rare Butterflies have been recorded during the past Summer from various parts of the Country. Mr. E. Morel, of Hoyalake, states in the "Pall Mall Gazette," that he took a dozen large Blues (*Lycæna arion*) on the outskirts of Dartmoor on July 15, at 8.30 a.m. We would much rather have read that Mr. Morel had observed instead of captured the 12 specimens of this beautiful insect, for it is strictly a local species, and is never very abundant. On the wing it can be identified from other Blues by the large size and dark appearance. The following counties are recorded in which this Butterfly has been noted:—Bedford, Buckingham, Devon, Dorset, Gloucester, Hants, Hereford, Huntingdon, Kent, Northampton, Shropshire, Somerset, and Wilts.

27th.—Strong winds, but bright and fine. Lark singing. Rooks



A CURIOUS AND RARE FUNGUS.

Photographed in the Ashridge Woods, Hertfordshire. It is known locally as the Candle, the cap or extinguisher had fallen off as shown in the photo.

bathing in the ditches. Many trees quite bare, especially the Lime. A little patch of Furze in flower. Flushed many Larks and some large flocks of Sparrows on waste ground in front of my house.

28th.—Bright during morning, and thermometer at Summer heat! Rain towards afternoon, and very heavy in the evening. Our notes now become fewer and fewer, and our "Flowers in Bloom" list will soon be almost dispensed with.

To-day's flora notes are as follows:—Flowers in bloom: Scentless Mayweed, Yarrow, Shepherd's Purse, Nipplewort, Autumnal Hawkbit, White Dead Nettle, Sow Thistle, Groundsel, Hedge Mustard, Red and White Clovers, Knot Grass, White and Yellow Charlocks, White Campion, Dandelion, Long-rooted Cat's Ear, Heartsease, Red Dead Nettle, Scarlet Poppy, Small Knapweed, Herb Robert, and Field Scabious.

Birds singing: Robin and Skylark.

Birds seen or heard:—House Sparrow (in large flocks, feeding on obnoxious weed seeds on waste ground), Rook, Hedge Sparrow, Starling (quite noisy; one rough old chap perched on the top of a chimney-pot singing for all he was worth), Chaffinch, Yellow Bunting (at the top of an Oak, and how his beautiful plumage harmonises with the foliage and bark), Nuthatch, Fieldfare, Blackbird (one heard uttering a sort of alarm-song), Great Tit, and Coal Tit. I cannot understand why so few Thrushes are to be seen. During the Spring and Summer the woods hereabouts echo and reverberate with sweet music; just now very few indeed are to be observed.

The various tints and colours now are exquisite; there is the copper of the Beech, the golden of the Maple, the yellow, brown, and red of the Hawthorn, the green of the Ash, the purple of the Blackthorn, the red of the Wild Cherry, the shiny green of the Holly, the yellow and green of the Oak, and the straw colour of the pliant Birch.

Do not the scarlet Holly berries show up against the dark green leaves? On a clump of Ivy we observed a Wasp and some other insects. The flowers of the Ivy are not yet full open.

Flowers in bloom in garden:—Garden Mallow, Eschscholtzia, French Marigold, Japanese, Anemone, Nasturtium, Pansy, Dahlia, Lobelia, and Primrose.

A Sparrow or two were flying about the garden to-day collecting nesting materials. Large leaves of the Garlic Mustard very prominent along the hedge banks now: it is damp underfoot; by the woods it smells quite leafy, and Autumn is really here.

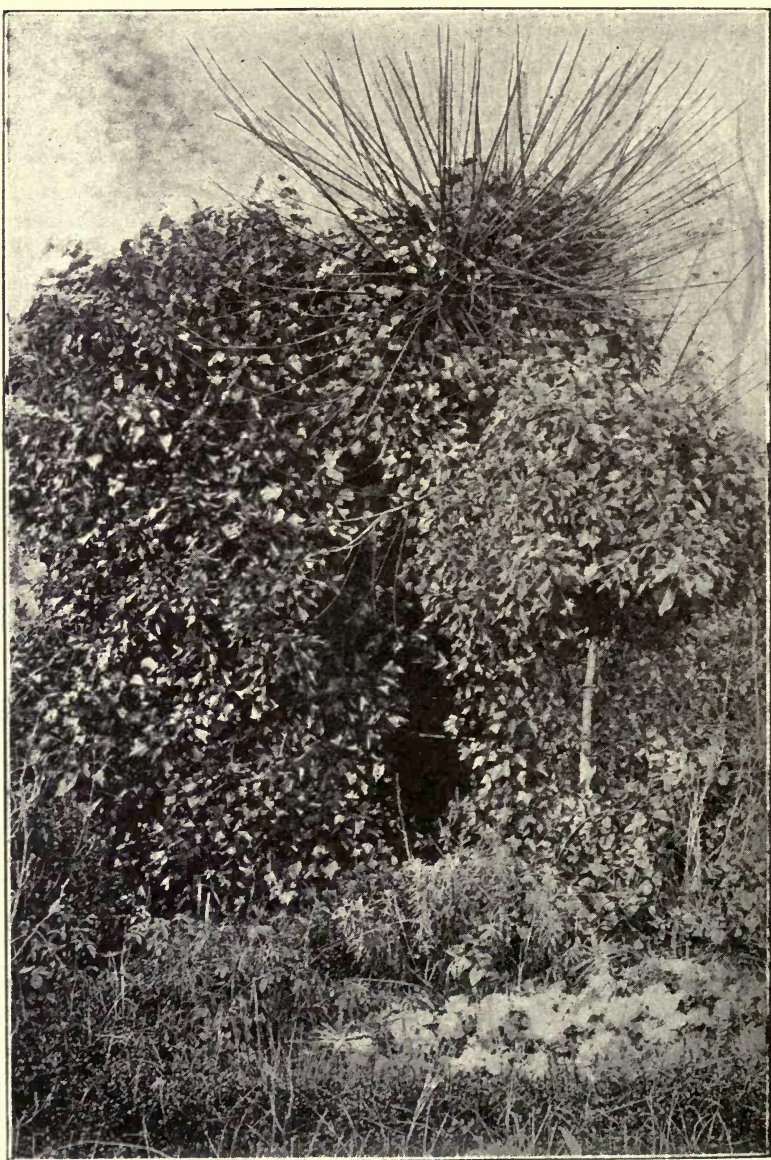
29th.—Bright. Skylark singing.

30th — Damp morning. Very heavy rains during last night. The Autumn tints will never look better than they do just now, and it is a perfect treat to take a journey by train through a well-wooded district. It is worth the penny a mile charged, only more so.

A Jackdaw went over my house early this morning, shouting loudly, and the Hedge Sparrow is very noisy.

31st.—Very close, but fine. Hedge Sparrow singing, also Lark. It is much too warm to be healthy.

NOVEMBER.



AN IYV BOWER.

NOVEMBER.

"The Wind Flower and the Violet, they perished long ago,
And the Briar Rose and the Orchis died amid the Summer glow;
The south wind searches for the flowers whose fragrance late he bore,
And sighs to find them in the wood and by the stream no more,"

1st.—Very heavy but much-needed rains. Afterwards bright, and the rain again. Still very close. Noticed to-day the beautiful yellow of the Mountain Ash leaves and the scarlet berries. What a study for an artist skilled in his profession!

2nd.—Dull and misty. Skylark singing. The leaves are rapidly falling now; the Limes are almost stripped.

3rd.—Dull, but fine. Hedge Sparrow, Robin, and Skylark singing. Many Red-legged Partridges, Widgeon, and Lapwings in London poulterers. What a great shame it is to shoot such an eminently useful and ornamental bird as the latter. Two flocks of Golden Plovers went over this afternoon. I was looking at a clump of trees from the railway train to-day near Elstree, Herts. I never before appreciated the Autumn tints so much; they were so exquisite, graceful, and beautiful. No artist can do such a scene justice.

With further reference to my recent notes as to Ivy being injurious to trees, Professor G. S. Boulger, F.L.S., F.G.S., answering a note of mine on the subject in the November issue of "Nature Notes," writes as follows:—"One of the best authorities on the dangers of woodlands, Dr. Furst, of Aschaffenburg, in his edition of Kawschinger's *Lehre von Waldschutzy* (1889), merely says of Ivy that it is "no parasite, for it derives all its nourishment from the soil, and all the rootlets appearing on stems and branches are merely supporting rootlets." We seldom or never see horizontal branches of Ivy embrace a stem, nor does it become embedded in and distort the tree as Honeysuckle distorts Hazel; so that on the whole, I think that the war waged upon it is largely prejudice."

4th.—Dull, Scotch misty morning. Rain towards afternoon and evening.

Flowers in bloom:—Charlock, Scentless Mayweed, Nipplewort, Long-rooted Cat's Ear, Groundsel, Scarlet Poppy, White Clover, Heartsease, Garlic Mustard (two pieces found in flower, surely extremely early, or should it be late?) Marsh Thistle, Creeping Crowfoot, Cow Parsnip, Wild Carrot, White Campion, Chickweed Sow Thistle, Field Scabious, Germander Speedwell, Bramble (still in flower in November!) Dandelion, Daisy (coming into flower again now), Yarrow (going off rapidly), Red Clover, Shepherd's Purse, White Dead Nettle, Hop Trefoil, and Hedge Mustard (just a little only in flower).

Birds singing:—Wren, Robin, Skylark, Song Thrush (heard one of these sweet-voiced birds singing gaily to-day; the first time for many weeks), and Hedge Sparrows; quite a formidable list of singing birds.

Birds seen or heard:—House Sparrow, Rook (going over early, cawing loudly), Blackbird (clucking in the spinneys), Chaffinch ("pinking"), Redwing, Jay (very noisy in the woods this morning), Starling, Linnet, Coal Tit, and Great Tit.

Noticed many Fungus rings under some Oak trees, and some eggs of the Bath White Butterfly attached to a fence. A Hare squatted and allowed us to pass within a yard or two of it. What fleet creatures these are, to be sure! They seem to be mad not only in March, but all the year round.

Now for a little sermonising. It is a dull November morning, but we see different forms of wild life each time we are astir. We may pass along one way and observe various creatures, then return within a few moments and see an entirely fresh list of performers on Nature's wondrous variety stage. A Coal Tit is flitting along the hedgerow perchance, and a Chaffinch is "pinking" in front of us. Some Starlings are busy chattering now, and a few Rooks have just flown overhead calling loudly to one another, followed by two or three Redwings and Linnets. Now a Jay is screaming in the woodland in the distance, and we can just hear some Partridges calling. Did you not catch a glimpse of that Weasel just now, or of that brushy-tailed Squirrel skipping about gathering together its Winter store, or of that Dormouse creeping noiselessly through the bracken and bushes in front of us? Truly we are favoured with an abundance of wild life, green fields and meadows, pleasant woodlands, and the

like. Those returning from the treeless veldt in South Africa just now must indeed be pleased to see the green meadows and well-timbered lands of the dear homeland once more.

5th.—Dull and misty. Over fifty Rooks went over my house at 8 a.m. Robin noisy in the garden; Hedge Sparrow singing.

6th.—Dull; raining. Robin singing. Bright moonlight night.

7th.—Wet; miserable, muggy weather. Robin and Skylark singing. Hedge Sparrow, Starling, and Chaffinch noisy.

8th.—Much clearer, brighter, and colder morning; rain towards afternoon and evening.

9th.—Bright, but cold.

10th.—Sharp, white frost last night; the first real snap we have had of Winter's icy touch. Bright and clear day. Misty towards evening. Chaffinch and Hedge Sparrow noisy.

11th.—Very hard white frost (7 degrees) again last night. Thick coating of ice on water-butt; one of the most sudden and sharpest November frosts I never remember. Rime on the trees and hedges very beautiful; what delicate filigree work, to be sure! It was delightful to be out and about this morning, but in spite of the hard frost the green and back lanes where we delight to wander were very dirty and in places well-nigh impassable.

Flowers in bloom:—Fumitory, Scentless Mayweed, Nipplewort, Sow Thistle, Groundsel, Germander Speedwell, Dandelion, Yarrow, Autumnal Hawkbit, Long-rooted Cat's Ear, Bramble (quite a lot of this flower in bloom in one certain sheltered spot), Dogwood (we were very surprised to find this in flower so late in the year), Lesser Stitchwort (a similar remark applies), Charlock (yellow and white), White Campion, and White Dead Nettle. Now that the frosts have set in, and November is so far advanced, our flora notes will soon cease; at least, our list will be reduced very considerably.

Birds singing:—Skylark, Robin, Hedge Sparrow, and brown Wren (what a perky little bird this is; it is so diminutive it often escapes attention).

Birds seen or heard:—Starling (fourteen of these birds allowed me to approach within a few feet of them, a result of last night's sharp frost), Rook (one very large flock of some hundreds seen), Chaffinch, House Sparrow, Mistle Thrush (a fine pair seen), Blackbird (male and female on an old brick wall by the water's side, and a great

many others seen), Green Woodpecker (laughing in the woods), Great Tit (uttering two notes for all the world resembling its name), Nuthatch, Ring Dove, Jackdaw, Partridge (many coveys put up), Pheasant, Jay (sporting in some tall Elms, but never a good sight could we get of this restless creature), Greenfinch, Lapwing (a flock of about twenty seen), Coal Tit, Bullfinch, and Yellow Bunting (mostly silent now). The cold snap seems to have re-animated bird life, and we have not spent such a pleasant morning amongst our friends the birds for a considerable time past.

How the white tail feathers of the Lark show as the bird is settling; we have hardly noted this before another soars heavenwards, a little Wren starts "clicking," the Rooks are busy "cawing," and the Chaffinch "pinking."



GUINEA FOWLS AT HOME.

When the air is clear, what a distance away one can hear a waterfall. On reaching it, we notice some hundreds of young Dace; what a banquet, indeed, for some voracious Pike, but here it is a Trout stream, and the fresh water Shark is kept down as far as is possible. By the river are many Willows, and we watch the leaves being cut by King Frost, and falling into the water either to float down towards the mill wheel, or sink into a cold bed at the bottom.

Walking up a green lane a Hare startled us by rushing right

across, followed by three dogs. The wild animal, on reaching the open country, soon gained ground, and the dogs were left far in the rear, much to the disgust of the three louts whose ill-trained dogs they were.

The Holly is a picture now in its scarlet and green livery. Here and there a patch of russet brown calls for our admiration, but most trees have now shed their Summer tresses, although the Oak seems very reluctant to cast off its exquisite foliage. The cones on the Spruce Fir are very prominent now, as also the cones on what I believe to be the Stone Pine.

Heard a fluty Blackbird singing in a wicker cage hung outside a cottage window. Watched some Rabbits feeding in a field skirting a wood, and was amused by a Blackbird flying quite close to them, and apparently startling the wary creatures. Query: Did the Blackbird frighten the Rabbits, or was the fact of the bird being in such a flurry a signal to the animals that danger was ahead?

On a roadside pond a score of Geese attracted our notice; they were in excellent fettle.

A few names of the farm and woods in this district may be interesting to my readers:—Farms: Kettlewell's, Megdell's, Butler's, Beech Hyde, Hog-end, Old Jerome's, New Jerome's, Southend, Three Cherrytrees, Woodhall, Bottom House, Woodwell's, Dane End, Baker's, Woodend, Corner Farm, Windridge, Hedge's, Marshall's Wick, Shafford, and Plaistow's Farms, Woods: Kentish, The Vistas, Brick-kiln, Windmill Hill, High Wood, Oakwood, Præ Wood, Birch, Park, Cuckman's, Great Furzefield, Home Wood, Batchwood, Sparrowswick, Ladies' Grove, Whitehedge Spring, Square Wood, Scrubs Wood, St. Julian's, Verulam, Appspond, Blackwater, Pancake, Deadman, Chandler's Grove, Skys, Chalk-dell, Beech Bottom, Bush, Green, and Kilmart's Spring Woods.

12th.—Still cold; raining. The Dahlias and the Nasturtiums in the garden have received their death warrant from the frost of the last two or three nights. The warrant has been duly signed, sealed, and delivered.

Mr. Arthur Martin, of Bournemouth, writes to me under to-day's date to say that he has seen the Nightjar distinctly sitting crosswise on a branch of a tree as birds in general do, and not lengthwise as is so generally supposed. I can only say that I have had many opportunities of studying this useful and interesting bird, and I have

never seen it sit otherwise than along a branch and not across it, as referred to by me under date of June 15th. I know Mr. Martin to be a very careful and painstaking observer, and the point he raises is very interesting, and should bring further information from readers of these notes.

Mr. Martin also informs me that on November 1 a Grey Phalarope was picked up on the shore at Bournemouth. It had evidently been unable to procure sufficient food owing to severe weather, and consequently perished. The Phalarope is an irregular visitor to the British Isles, occurring in Autumn and Winter. At this season of the year the plumage is pure white underneath, and a delicate pale grey on the upper parts.



LONG-TAILED TITMOUSE.

cannot recover during the day even when it is fine. The early mists of the morning have barely cleared off ere the dew of evening comes on and adds more moisture to the already moist surroundings. Skylark still silent.

17th.—Fine morning; driving rain later, accompanied by cutting North winds.

18th.—Cold N. winds, but fine.

Flowers in bloom are now very few indeed, and our list will very soon be dispensed with entirely. Those for to-day include Groundsel, Shepherd's Purse, Furze (quite a nice lot of this coming into bloom), Yarrow, Daisy, Long-rooted Cat's Ear, and Dandelion.

Birds singing:—Skylark (casually, not continuously), and Robin.

The same correspondent also tells me that he has in his possession a Dartford Warbler, which was shot at Poole, Dorset, on October 13 last.

13th.—Very close and muggy. Lark and Robin singing. The former is not now in such continuous song.

14th.—Weather as yesterday.

15th.—Rain. Blustering S.E. winds. Robin and Hedge Sparrow noisy, but neither singing.

16th.—Fine early, rain later. Everything gets damp and wet now, and

Birds seen or heard:—Chaffinch, House Sparrow (saw one or two to-day clinging to a wall after the manner of a Swift), Rook, Greenfinch, Hedge Sparrow, Blackbird, Jay, and Starling.

Some of the leaves have not yet fallen, and those on the Wych Elm are still very delicate and beautiful. The Oak mostly retains its foliage as yet. We rambled to-day with a friend from the North, and he was particularly struck with the foliage still being on the trees; it seemed to him like the month of September, he remarked.

Down a green lane, which just now is disagreeable walking unless one has on some good, thick, water-tight boots and a pair of serviceable leggings, we came across some roughish-looking customers boiling what was apparently a cabbage borrowed from a neighbouring field. Two or three loaves of bread were to be seen on the green grass breakfast-table, and the loafers were evidently going to have a royal feast of bread and cabbage!

The berries of the Wild Guelder Rose are still very beautiful, and the hedgerows, which are daily assuming a more destitute appearance, may now be seen laden with Hips and Haws more prominently than before.

19th.—Quite a change in the weather. Bright, bracing morning. House Sparrows making themselves prominent in the garden. Dame Nature seems reluctant to shake off her Autumn attire, but in many places the trees and hedgerows are quite bare, and present quite a wintry aspect.

20th.—Fine weather. Skylark still silent. Robin noisy, but not singing.

21st.—Fine open weather. Hedge Sparrow and Robin singing.

22nd.—Muggy weather. Robin and Hedge Sparrow singing cheerily.

Note.—On the 19th and 20th, when it was fine and bright, neither bird was singing; to-day it has been muggy, and both birds have been singing gaily. Skylark still silent.

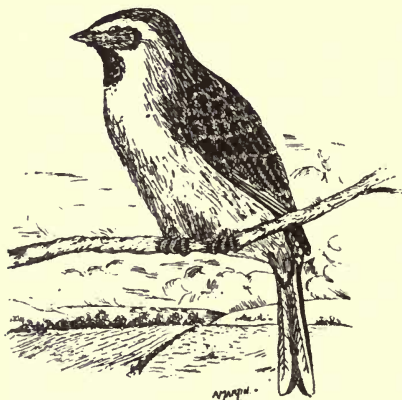
23rd.—Typical November morning; foggy and damp. Hedge Sparrow noisy, House Sparrows chirping.

24th.—Dull and November-like. Hedge Sparrow singing almost continuously now. Strong winds towards evening.

My note a few weeks since that some Rooks were building has been eclipsed by a report in the "Field" of a nest of Young Rooks

in the parish of Blakesley, in Northamptonshire, on November 10th last.

When out rambling recently a friend asked me which was the smallest bird that walks, and my prompt reply was the Pied Wagtail. He then asked me which was the heaviest bird that flies, and I answered, and I think correctly, the Great Bustard. When, however, he queried which is the largest British bird that hops, I had to admit defeat. Can any reader give the reply?



CURL BUNTING.

Mr. W. D. Bowers, of Watford, Herts., writes to me to say that early in this month he caught a Dace which turned the scale at one pound two and a half ounces. It is the largest Dace I have heard of.

25th.—Heavy rain early this morning, fine and Spring-like later.

Flowers in bloom:—Groundsel, Nipplewort (probably included for the last time), White Dead Nettle, Shepherd's Purse, Yarrow (nearly finished), Wild Carrot (a solitary piece in flower), Long-

rooted Cat's Ear, Dandelion, Charlock, and Furze.

Birds singing:—Skylark (although such a Spring-like morning and many hundreds of these birds were to be seen and heard twittering, only a few were to be heard in song), Blackbird, Song Thrush (to hear these two last-named birds singing on a November morn was a great treat, but the song was by no means prolonged), Robin, brown Wren, and Hedge Sparrow.

Birds seen or heard:—House Sparrow (in large flock on the recently ploughed land), Rook, Chaffinch, Starling (quite a number on the manure and refuse heaps in the fields quarrelling, fighting, and screaming over some precious tit-bit), Yellow Bunting, Mistle Thrush, Great Tit (very noisy this morning, and what a variety of notes it utters), Jay (how attractive this bird when on the ground), Wild Duck (a very large flock went over my house towards the N.E.), Nuthatch, and Ring Dove (what a strong flier this bird is, and how conspicuous are the white patches on the wings when it is flying).

The Oats are up three or four inches high now, and the fresh green gives a very pleasant appearance as against the brown and yellow Autumn tints.

Turning off out of the main road, and up a well-wooded private drive quite a pandemonium was to be heard amongst the feathered occupants in the Firs, Brambles, and Rhododendrons. Jays were shrieking, Nuthatches calling, Chaffinches "pinking," Great Tits scolding, and the Robin uttering its clicking notes. Nothing reminded me of Spring this morning so much as the liveliness and activity of the birds, especially the Titmice.

The Ivy is heading up very conspicuously now, and the male blossom buds of the Nut Hazel are to be seen.

Many Rabbits scampered out of the tangled grasses skirting the woods, and one or two black ones were noted. The pliant Silver Birch is very attractive just now, also the dried brown clumps of the Hornbeam, which retains its foliage throughout the Winter. On a farmhouse quite a quantity of delicate pink Roses were in bloom, and our last note to-day is to the effect that, although we ramble miles each week over public field paths and lanes, it is rare we meet a living soul. Has the country side no attraction for these stay-at-homes?

26th.—Misty early, but Spring-like later. A beautiful sunrise. Hedge Sparrow singing cheerily.

27th.—Another exquisite sunrise. Again fine and bright.

A correspondent at Leatherhead writes me that he to-day saw a Red Admiral Butterfly flying about. This is certainly a late occurrence.

28th.—Gusty and raining, but by no means cold. Starlings singing gaily in the garden. They come regularly each day now.

29th.—Again blustering and raining.

30th.—More open and bright, but not cold. Lark and Robin silent; the former seems to have gone right off song again. Only fancy, another month to go and the nineteenth century—this wonderful century, as Alfred Russel Wallace so truly says and proves in his wonderful book—will be no more. We are almost on the threshold of the twentieth century. What changes time has wrought, what greater changes will still be wrought in the future! We live in a wonderful age, indeed. Telephones, telegraphs, motors, cinematographs, biographs, electricity, photography, and many another

marvellous invention has been brought to light during the fast closing century. There are "booms" almost continually; goodness only knows what human life will be like unto a hundred years hence! But as to that, those of the present generation need not trouble themselves.

The country side is being encroached upon in many districts by the speculative builder, but there is ample room for Natural History study for many, many years to come. We may ramble week by week in the same neighbourhood, often and often down the same lanes, through the same old woods, across the well-known fields, yet every time something crops up of never-failing interest. We never weary at this barren season of hearing the Robin and the Thrush singing, the Chaffinch "pinking" and the Rooks "crooing," the Hedge Sparrow "cheeping," and the Pied Wagtail crying "cheese it, cheese it, cheese it," as we disturb the gentle tripping creature as he is nimbly running over the newly turned-up clods of earth, or of the Nuthatch whistling, the chattering Starling, the noisy Ring Dove, the scampering Hare, the frolicsome Rabbits, the creeping mouse-like Jenny Wren, the agile Stoat or Weasel, the darting Jay, the swift-winged Kingfisher; these all contribute to the familiar sights and sounds.

We never tire of Nature; whenever we open her book a new page is presented to view. We may have seen the impression before, but now we imagine we see it in broader, deeper lines, only to find shortly after that this again was but an impression. Just now one's thoughts turn to the various insects, chrysalides, and grubs harbouring in crannies and crevices, and underground, in a torpid state. Thousands upon thousands of minute creatures are stored away in profound slumber, sleeping until the Spring. They sleep, but it is no ordinary slumber, for the allwise goddess, Nature, has so ordained it that in this Winter torpor cold or frost rarely affects them. To all appearances when disturbed in the midst of their Winter sleep these creatures are lifeless; but Spring tells a different tale. It is very wonderful, and the more so when one reflects upon the fact that many winged creatures emerge from the chrysalis state during the night so as to be prepared for their aerial flights on their natal day. How do the apparently insensible mites know when it is night? It is instinct, or sense, or what? All around us, therefore, in most unlikely places perchance, are secreted these wonderful creatures which will gladden our sense of sight next Summer as the Cuckoo will our sense of hearing.

DECEMBER.



GOING TO THE MEET.

DECEMBER.

"Hail to the coming of healthful Winter,
Hail to the festive joys of Yule."

1st.—Wet, miserable, and close.

2nd.—Damp, unseasonable weather.

The only flowers found in bloom to-day were—: Shepherd's Purse, Autumnal Hawkbit, Groundsel, Furze, and Heartsease.

Birds singing,—Robin and Song Thrush (listened with much pleasure to three of these birds singing gaily this morning).

Birds seen or heard.—A great many Skylarks seen chasing one another and twittering the while, but not singing; Carrion Crow, Yellow Bunting, Starling, Hedge Sparrow, Rook (on a gun going off how the artful birds manage to keep just out of gun-shot), Blackbird, Jay, and Chaffinch.

Several loafers out with greyhounds; watched two or three runs with Hares.

3rd.—Dull and misty, but not at all cold. Very un-December-like weather as yet. Starlings and Hedge Sparrows noisy in the garden.

4th.—Beautiful, bright, and clear. Like a Spring morning. Skylark still silent. Robin not singing.

5th.—Dull and misty early, rain later. Hedge Sparrow singing.

6th.—Clearer and brighter morning, again giving place to rain later. A beautiful sunrise.

A solitary Skylark singing up aloft, appearing like a mere speck against the blue and white sky-line.

7th.—Fine early; colder. Starlings and Hedge Sparrows prominent in the neighbourhood of my garden. Another gorgeous sunrise.

Mr. Arthur Martin, of Bournemouth, writes to me to say that a friend of his has received a Pomatorhine Skua (*Stercorarius pomatorhinus*) shot at Weymouth early this month. This Skua is for the most part a common Spring or Autumn migrant to our Country, and examples are not unfrequently met with during the Winter. It is an inhabitant of the Northern Nearctic and Palearctic Regions, and in the colouration of its plumage varies considerably. There are two distinct varieties, one being light and the other dark, and, curious to relate, neither seems to be attributable to sex or age. The mature bird of the light form is mostly dark brown above, black crown, white neck, with a buffish-yellow tinge, dull white breast, brown on lower belly and under tail coverts, brown irides, deep horn-coloured bill, black at tip, black legs and feet. It is about 21 inches in length.

8th.—Dark morning, fine early, rain later. Strong S.W. wind afternoon and evening. Skylark singing. Starlings very noisy, also Chaffinch. Common Bunting went over, crying "Tisit, titit." It is not often one comes across this latter bird, in spite of the forepart of its name. Robin singing.

Mr. Robert Wilkinson is the writer of a very interesting and valuable letter to the London "Standard." Mr. Wilkinson pleads—and that he has good cause to do so we ourselves can testify—for the stoppage of what is wanton slaughter of bird life, *i.e.*, the habits of poulterers and the like of decorating their shops with uneatable and oftentimes rare birds. We have seen Herons, Hawks, Terns, Gulls and other birds strung up amongst Plovers, Grouse, Pheasants and other perfectly legitimate species, and have often wondered what mortal good such exposures could do the salesman. Doubtless, these birds are included in the hampers of Wild Fowl, etc., despatched to the shops; but the old adage still holds good, that if there were no receivers there would be no, or few thieves. It is a crying shame that these evils should be allowed to exist unchecked, and bird lovers everywhere should make it a sacred duty to remonstrate with those receiving and exposing such birds as have been mentioned above and give their custom elsewhere.

9th.—We have had some very damp and dismal week-ends with Nature just recently. To-day it was very wet until about 11 a.m., when the sun got through and cleared up beautifully. In spite of the dismal surroundings, we were out and about fairly early, and were well rewarded for any discomfort by being able to make the following notes:—

Flowers in bloom now.—Groundsel, Furze (one bush a blaze of yellow out of quite an acre), Dandelion, White Dead Nettle, Yarrow (just a little lingers on), Shepherd's Purse, and actually a small clump of Ragwort.

Birds singing.—Skylark (the most common bird this morning was the Lark. Larks were everywhere, and singing joyously. So soon as it was fine and bright, the birds ceased singing. Is it not curious?) Song Thrush (heard quite a score of these birds in song. It was quite a pleasure to be treated to such Avian song with the surroundings so unpleasant), Robin, Common Wren, and Hedge Sparrow. Quite a formidable list of birds in song.



CHRISTMAS TURKEYS.

Birds seen or heard.—Rook, Jackdaw (disturbed some hundreds of these two last-named birds on some grass land, where they were feeding. They seemed to resent this interference very much, and circled overhead cawing and "jacking" loudly), Great Tit (very noisy; and what a variety of notes it utters, to be sure); Blackbird, Starling, Chaffinch, Partridge, Pheasant, Greenfinch (flitting along the hedges quite trustfully), Pied Wagtail, Jay, Lapwing (a very large flock observed flying very high up; how close and even the whole company

keep together), and House Sparrow (observed one of these birds, a rosy-breasted male Chaffinch, and a speckled Thrush busy washing themselves simultaneously in a puddle by a rustic bridge; a very interesting proceeding indeed).

The light green of the Oats, &c., contrasts very finely with the newly up-turned soil hard by. Nearly every tree is bare now, enjoying a well-earned rest, and the country wears quite a wintery look.

The raindrops on the hedgerows this morning reminded one of so many buds of pure crystal. Has the reader noticed how each raindrop lodges on a bud, or at the end of a branchlet? The new red shoot on a Wild Rose bush as looked at through a raindrop—in other words, through Nature's own microscope—is very striking.

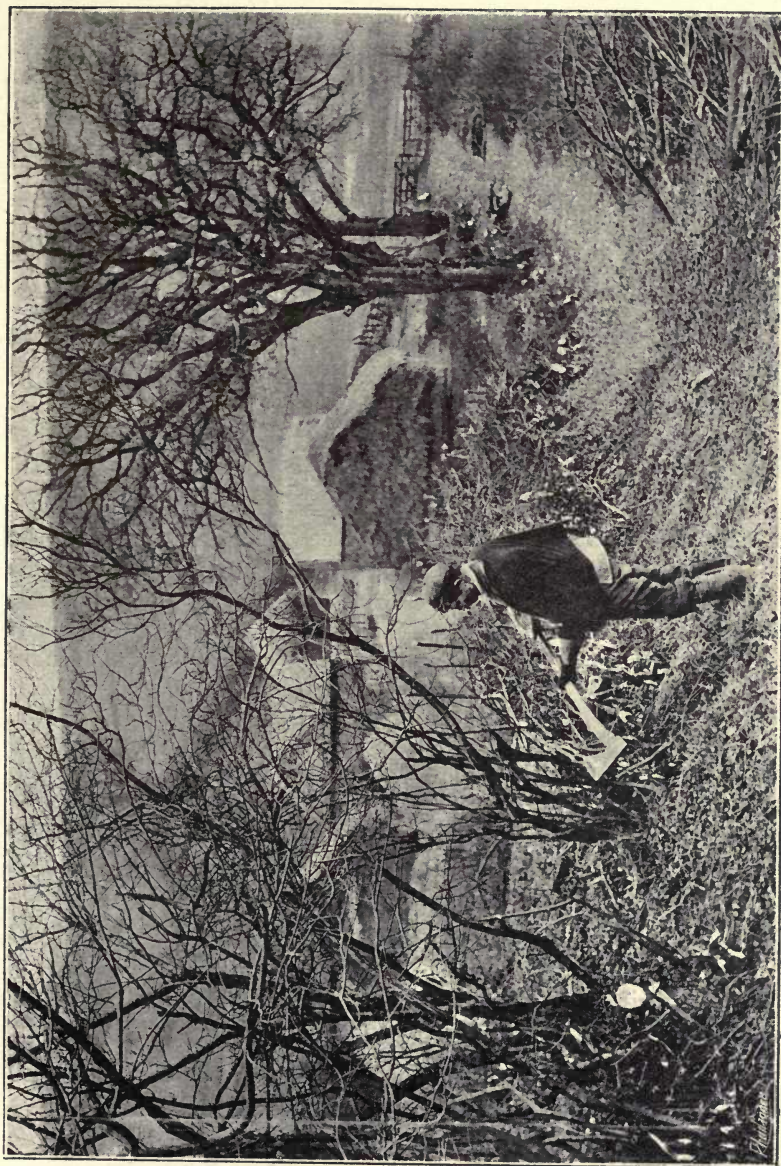
The birds have been very busy amongst the Hips and Haws, especially the former.

What a lot of nests one can see now that the leaf is off. How we hunted and hunted in that old thorn bush last Summer, and could not find the nest neither high nor low. Here we now see it at our very feet. What stupids we were not to look just there.

We explored this morning in the neighbourhood where the River Colne is first to be seen. During the Summer it is practically dry, but after the recent prolonged rain, and during Winter, its course is easily traced, and it flows in one spot across the roadway; that is why there is a diverted path up the bank and across a rustic wooden bridge. On our ramble to-day we were just able to cross the road, but a little later the stream will be swollen, so that to cross one must take advantage of the Winter track up the bank and over the bridge.

We met the villagers going to morn-song—why not this as well as evensong—and very trim and neat they appeared in their black Sunday clothes. They are very orthodox in their attendance at the village church; for one reason, if they are not there all the world knows it. The village schoolmaster must, of course, attend; he, perchance, leads the rustic choir, and dare not offend the vicar. They wander in through the porchway in a long straggling line, bid one another a cheery “Good morning,” and enter the sacred building ushered in by the sweet pæan of a Redbreast, the carol of a Wren, or the lyrics of King Thrush, who may be seen perched on a naked Lime tree in the churchyard hard by. It is all very rural and simple; thus it has a charm for us.

A sluggish river runs through the common, and in it we noticed



HEDGING.

many small "Jack" and a few Dace. There are many Perch here, too, but they run to no size. The village is named after the river Colne, and as there is a heath or common there, too, we get to Colney Heath. Why the "y" was ever added, goodness only knows. A little distance off there is another village on the Colne, and on the main London road; this is known as London Colney; whilst yet a little farther is another village, also on the Colne, known as Colney Street. On the village school at London Colney we observed in now faded flowers the following words, evidently put up with pride by the village lads and lasses: "All honour to our brave soldiers." I wonder how many soldiers of the King (if any) have seen that simple motto on the schoolhouse in that quiet Hertfordshire village. On the schoolmaster's house Yellow Jasmine was blooming freely, and our concluding note to-day is to the effect that, have caressed some horses to-day when traversing across some park land, we feel we cannot do better than write as in schoolboy's days: "The Horse is a noble animal."

10th.—White frost last night. Colder this morning, and brighter.

11th.—Fine. Robin and Hedge Sparrow singing. A friend who has just returned from a sea-fishing trip at Deal tells me that down there Sprats are sold by the thousand, and a thousand average fish should weigh thirty-seven pounds, or rather it should be said that they are sold in thirty-seven pound lots, which are supposed to include somewhere about one thousand fish.

12th.—Clearer; not so damp and dismal. About a dozen Jackdaws went over my house just after it was light this morning, towards the South, calling loudly. Starlings noisy. Robins and House Sparrows in the garden, the latter trying to skirmish round the meat bone which is now hung up for the Tits. These birds do not seem in a hurry to visit us this Winter, but so soon as we have any real hard weather doubtless we shall be amused and interested by their pranks as they cling to the suspended bone. Raining at night.

13th.—Raining. Very dark morning. Robin singing; also Hedge Sparrow and Song Thrush.

14th.—Clearer and brighter. I was somewhat astonished to-day to find a good deal of Green Fly on my Rose trees.

15th.—A very beautiful pink and blue sky in the East first thing. Windy, and the air much clearer. Showery, but brilliant sunshine in between.

Mr. Hooker, gardener at Malling House, near Lewes, Sussex writes to me to say that he recently found a Starling's nest "on the lawn" there. One egg was laid on December 8th and another on the 10th. I hardly understand a Starling's nest being built on a lawn, or on the ground at all. I should rather have thought that the female had to lay the eggs somewhere and chose that particular spot, so that really no nest was built. At all events, this occurrence strikingly illustrates the mildness of the season.

16th.—Much colder, but welcome sunshine. A perfect December day.



CHEERFUL OLD AGE.

The old dame in the foreground is ninety-four years of age.

The only flowers noticed in bloom to-day were:—Shepherd's Purse, Dandelion, Groundsel, Furze, Yarrow, Autumnal Hawkbit (only a very little), Garlic Mustard, and Cinquefoil. The flowering of the two last-named at this season appears to me to be quite phenomenal, and must not be taken seriously.

Birds singing.—Skylark, Robin, Song Thrush, and Hedge Sparrow.

Birds seen or heard.—House Sparrow (bathing in the road puddles on this bleak December morn; how clean birds are has been amply demonstrated to me just recently), Rook, Blackbird (how low this bird flies, and how rare it is seen in the open), Great Tit, Chaffinch, Fieldfare, Sparrow Hawk, Starling (with the aid of our strong glass we could see very plainly the beautifully-marked breast of this bird; to the naked eye it is quite invisible. Several of these birds had been bathing, too, and sat at the top of an Oak sunning themselves).

The cones on the Spruce Fir are very prominent indeed just now and the various berries seem more scarlet than ever. The birds have taken a quantity of them, but we have had no hard weather yet to try their hunger.

Ploughing is still taking place, and the land looks fresh and fertile. What a great good it does the land to have it thrown up in ridges and clods for the frost to get into and improve.

The Haystacks stand out well in the landscape now, and many a little fortune may be espied tucked away in some distant rickyard. How snug and inviting a farmhouse looks, as well as a lodge. Has the reader ever noticed this?

17th.—Weather as yesterday. Starlings and House Sparrows is rows on garden fence. Hedge Sparrow and Robin also prominent. Song Thrush singing. Primroses in flower in garden.

18th.—Clear and bright; weather much more seasonable. It is much better than the close, muggy weather of late, making one feel better both in health and temper. Hedge Sparrow singing.

19th.—Colder, but bright. Hedge Sparrow, Robin, and Song Thrush singing. Skylark silent. Rooks noisy. Rain and white frost last night.

20th.—Windy, very dark morning, and raining. Quite a gale at night.

21st. My calendar says this is the shortest day of the year, but it was much lighter this morning than yesterday, and altogether a longer term of daylight has prevailed!

High wind, and cold. Looks like being a green Christmas. Heavy rain last night. House Sparrows busy feeding on meat bone hung up in the garden. Not a single Titmouse has been seen to visit us yet. Given a cold Winter snap, they will doubtless soon make their appearance. Skylark still silent.

22nd.—My calendar says Winter commences to-day. Curious to relate, the said calendar has not for a wonder belied itself, for the weather when we woke this morning was found to be much colder, with a very pronounced white frost. Winter! At 9 a.m. the glass was a couple of points above freezing.

Song Thrush and Hedge Sparrow singing; Skylarks fluttering about, but quite silent; Rooks passing over to their feeding grounds. A couple of the latter birds were strutting about in the road in front of my house picking up tit-bits early this morning, whilst many House Sparrows and Larks were feeding on the seeds of various weeds on some waste ground opposite.

23rd.—Cold, frosty morning. Although there was a very hard frost last night, there was still two degrees at 10 a.m. The air was thick and misty.

The only flowers noticed in bloom to-day were Shepherd's Purse and Groundsel.

The Song Thrush was the only bird heard singing to-day, and that only slightly.

Birds seen or heard—Chaffinch, Starling, House Sparrow, Pied Wagtail, Skylark, Ring Dove (getting much noisier lately), Robin, Blackbird, Yellow Bunting, Bullfinch (this bird has not often been included in our lists during the past year), Hedge Sparrow, Nuthatch, and Great Tit.

Noticed a Squirrel scampering about in a Fir spinney, as nimble and agile as ever, as interesting to watch as ever he was.

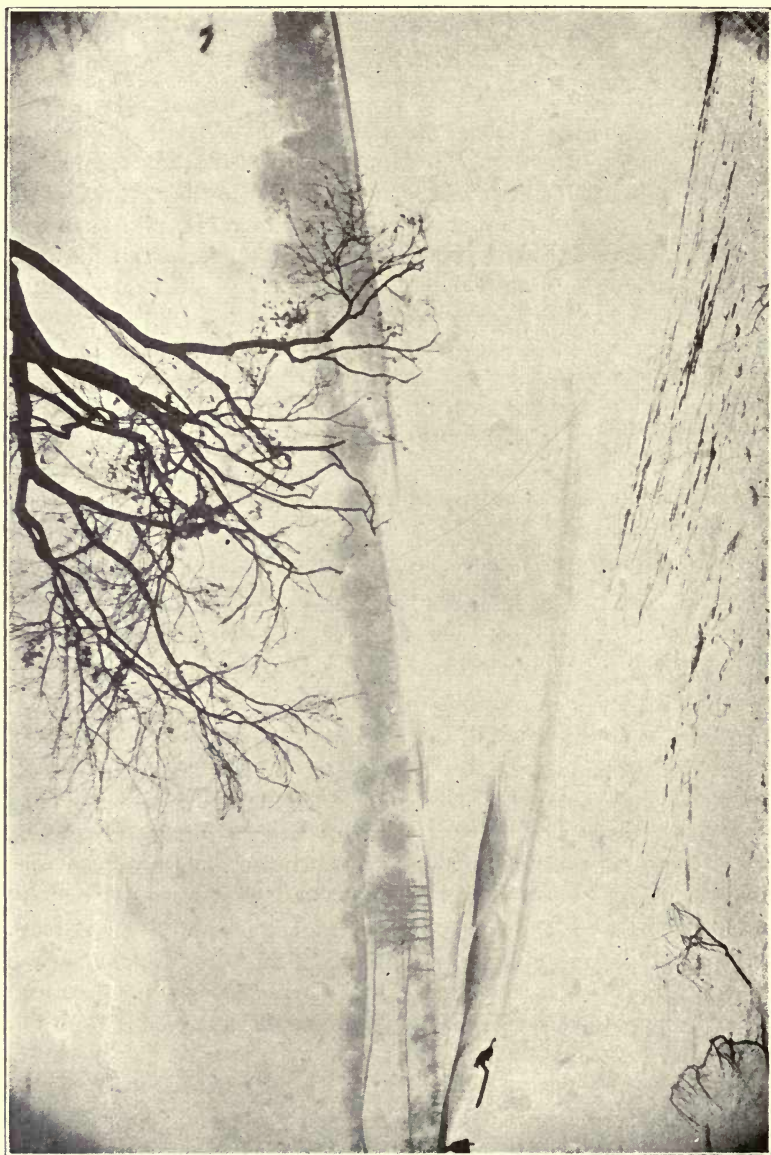
Too misty all day to make any lengthened notes; all living creatures seem to be hidden away waiting for better and brighter days.

24th.—Damp, misty, miserable weather. Walked thirteen or fourteen miles, and observed the following birds:—

Nuthatch, Great Tit, Chaffinch, Bullfinch, Jackdaw, Rook, Great Spotted Woodpecker (how undulating the flight, especially when the bird is lighted upon in the open. Flushed one to-day some distance away from any trees, and watched it fly to the nearest shelter with interest and pleasure), Song Thrush, Mistle Thrush, Hedge Sparrow, Blackbird, Pied Wagtail, and Wren.

Noticed some Indian Runner Ducks on a sheet of water, and also three Wild Ducks, which were so tame that they allowed us to feed them, and almost took food from the hand.

The Moles have been busy casting up.



A SNOW-CLAD PARK.

The White Dead Nettle is still flowering freely.

25th.—Christmas Day, and what Christmas weather to be sure! Fog and mist gone; much warmer; but still damp and miserable. A green Christmas. Our only note to-day is that the Furze is rapidly coming into full bloom.

26th.—Clearer and brighter; the very essence of Spring. Heavy rains last night. Song Thrush singing, also Robin.

27th.—Very heavy rains again last night. Raining this morning; very dark. Hedge Sparrow and Robin singing. Starlings very noisy. A Skylark's egg was found to-day by Mr. Cockerills, market gardener, at Avington, near Northampton. The egg was perfectly fresh. Skylarks are always very early birds to pair off. I have often noticed them chasing one another and evidently on the look-out for partners during the Winter months, and especially in early Spring. But birds are peculiar, and one should never be surprised at their doings. Indeed, variety is one of the characteristics which makes bird life so fascinating a study, and, after all, eggs laid by birds during December is not extraordinary or unaccountable. What of a Parrot, which had been kept in solitary confinement for fifteen years, starting to lay eggs, as was recently recorded on good authority?

28th.—Rain during last night as heretofore, but fine to-day, and very strong South-west gale blowing Colder.

During the 19th century we in Great Britain have had to mourn the loss of the Bittern, the Avocet, the Ruff, the Great Bustard, Savi's Warbler, the Black-tailed Godwit, and the Black Tern; and it was during the 19th century, too, that the last Great Auk was captured in the British Isles, and became extirpated elsewhere. In the animal world we have almost lost the Marten, the Polecat, and the old English Black Rat, but one cannot speak with certainty, for it is extremely difficult to prove these latter statements. We may still count the Badger, the Otter, and the Wild Cat in our fauna, and may compliment ourselves too, that in spite of the fact that we have lost in the insect world the Large Copper, the Swallow-tail, the Apollo, and Mazarine Blue Butterflies, we have had the pleasure of noting the re-appearance of the Camberwell Beauty and many rare Hawk Moths.

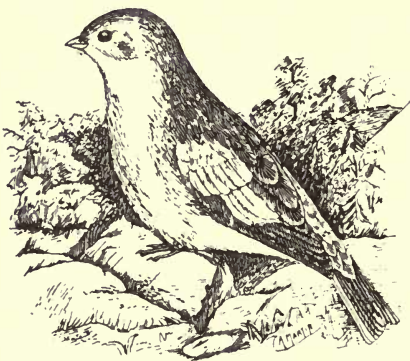
29th.—Wind dropped. Much colder and clearer. Skylark still silent. Robin and Hedge Sparrow not singing continuously. Song Thrush the noisiest bird just now.

30th.—Raining all day in torrents, but being the last day of the

Nineteenth Century on which we should have the opportunity of a ramble we braved the unpropitious elements, and here is the result:—

Flowers in bloom.—Shepherd's Purse, Furze, and White Dead Nettle.

Birds singing.—Robin (chanting a farewell lay to the fast dying century), Song Thrush, Hedge Sparrow, and Wren.



SNOW BUNTING.

Birds seen or heard.—House Sparrow, Starling (I wonder what on earth sort of music this interesting bird presumes to utter; it really is curious to listen to the bird, now uttering a humanlike whistle, now chattering like a miniature Crow-scaring rattle, now warbling, now—but it is impossible to write every sound the bird sings, and talks, and chatters, and what not—) Skylark, Rook, Blackbird, Pied Wagtail, (this bird when seen

perched on a tree, as we happened to see it this morning, does not seem altogether in its proper element; to see it to perfection one must observe the sprightly little creature running and walking alternately along the ground), Chaffinch, Yellow Bunting Greenfinch, Nuthatch, Ring Dove (for a considerable time past this bird has been mostly silent, but to-day several were to be heard telling the old, old story to the partners of their joys and sorrows, "Don't scold so, Suky"), Great Tit (how one may be deceived by one of the notes of this mimicking bird, being so like unto that of the "pink, pink" of the Chaffinch), and Jay.

It is now that we appreciate the Ivy-clad trees and Ivy bowers. Many Gnats out. Came across a wood of Hornbeam. What a contrast to the surrounding country, all wintery and bare. Here one sees acres of brown and bronze leaves tossing and murmuring in the December breeze.

It is hedge-trimming time now, and as one gets about the countryside piles of faggots can be seen by the hedgerows.

The new leaves of the Honeysuckle are unrolling fast, and there

is small wonder for it when the mildness of the weather is taken into consideration.

31st.—After the rain of yesterday and last night, a heavy Northerly wind, cutting and cold. The floods are out. Colder towards afternoon and evening.

Now that our Natural History diary for another year has been brought to a close, we are enabled to analyse the song-period of the Skylark. In the first month of the year he sang but slightly, spasmodically one might say, and was not in full and continued song until February 17. From that date until July 29 it sang without a break, but from then until September 23 (*i.e.*, during the moulting season), the bird was mostly silent. Then it resumed song again and sang right away to December 16, since which date we have not heard it.

Thus finishes our Natural History Notes for the closing year of the Nineteenth Century. It seems but as yesterday that we started our unpretentious note-book; time rushes on at such a pace, and nobody can say "Stop"!

Have we not had an interesting Natural History year, though poor and unpretentious our notes thereon may be? We give thanks however, for having had good health and strength throughout the year to be out and about, admiring and taking note of Nature's creations. Wonders upon wonders there are on every side. The world we live in is a wonder in its very existence—a very miracle indeed. If people did but take notice of the things around them, how different their lives might be made. For ourselves, we have rambled in a restricted district, and each week our walks have been mostly in the same directions. Yet we have never tired; each time we have been out new sights and sounds have presented themselves, and every country walk has been fraught with delights and pleasures. We have had change in great abundance, although limited has been our naturalising area; yet I may in conclusion well say with dear old Richard Jefferies: "I do not want change; I want the same old and loved things, the same wild flowers, the same trees and soft ash-green, the Turtle Doves, the Blackbirds, the coloured Yellow Hammer sing, sing, singing so long as there is light to cast a shadow on the dial, for such is the measure of his song, and I want them in the same place. Let me find them morning after morning, the starry-white petals radiating, striving upwards, to their ideal. Let me see

the idle shadows resting on the white dust; let me hear the Humble Bees, and stay to look down on the yellow Dandelion disk. Let me see the very Thistles opening their great crowns—I should miss the Thistles; the Reed Grasses hiding the Moorhen; the Bryony bine, at first crudely ambitious and lifted by force of youthful sap straight above the hedgerow, to sink of its weight presently and progress with crafty tendrils; Swifts shoot through the air with outstretched wings, like crescent-headed shaftless arrows darted from the clouds; the Chaffinch with a feather in her bill; all the living staircase of Spring, step by step, upwards to the great gallery of the Summer; let me watch the same succession year by year."

THE END.

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ADDENDA.

Page 109, fourth paragraph, *re* Cow Bird, Scientific name is *Molothrus bonariensis*, not as stated. Also, for "Sturnidæ, or Starling family," read "Steridæ family." Although many species are outwardly much like Starlings in appearance, they are true Passeres and therefore nearer to the Starlings than the Cuckoos, with which they have nothing in common excepting the parasitic breeding habits of some species.

Page 183, line 35 etc., as to Moss growing for the most part and thickest on the North side; unfortunately for the truthfulness of this otherwise interesting item of folk-lore, the notion is not established by Science, and an examination of a number of trees has shown Professor Henry Kraemer, a Philadelphia botanist, that 10 per cent. had the Moss on the West side, 10 per cent. on the North-west side, 10 per cent. on the North side, 20 per cent. on the North-east side, 35 per cent. on the East side, and 15 per cent. on the South-east side.

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